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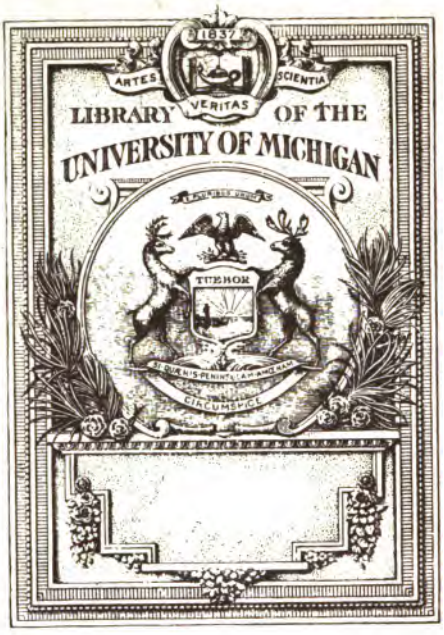

THE GIFT OF
Ernest Lutz

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1812

Mr Rice's
Presented by his friend
Mr. John Cosgrave of
Albany May 5. 1822

RATIONAL ENQUIRY, &c.

Natural Religion Insufficient, and Revealed Necessary, to Man's Happiness in his Present State:

OR, A

RATIONAL INQUIRY

INTO THE

PRINCIPLES

OF THE

MODERN DEISTS;

WHEREIN

IS LARGELY DISCOVERED THEIR UTTER INSUFFICIENCY TO ANSWER THE GREAT ENDS OF RELIGION, AND THE WEAKNESS OF THEIR PLEADINGS FOR THE SUFFICIENCY OF NATURE'S LIGHT TO ETERNAL HAPPINESS:

AND PARTICULARLY

The Writings of the late learned LORD HERBERT, the great Patron of Deism, to wit, his Books DE VERITATE, DE RELIGIONE GENTILIUM, and RELIGIO LAICI in so far as they assert Nature's Light able to conduct us to future Blessedness, are considered, and fully answered.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ESSAY ON THE TRUE GROUND OF FAITH.

By the late Reverend MR. THOMAS HALYBURTON,
Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

A scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth. PROV. xiv. 6.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. JOHN vii. 17.

Solis nosse Deos & cæli numina vobis,
Aut solis nescire, datum. Lucan. de Druid.

ALBANY:
PRINTED BY H. C. SOUTHWICK,
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1812.

PREFACE.

THE God of glory hath not left himself without a witness; all his works do, after their manner declare his glory. *Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?* Job xii. 7, 8, 9. Moreover it hath pleased him to instamp upon the consciences of men, such deep impressions of his being and glory, that all the powers and subtilty of hell, shall never be able to eradicate them: Though, alas! through a custom of sin, and especially against much light and conviction, the consciences of many are debauched in these dregs of time, to an obliterating of these impressions, which otherwise would have been strong and vivid. The principles of moral equity carry such an evidence in their nature, and are also accompanied with so much of binding force upon the conscience, that their obligation on rational creatures hath a most resplendent clearness, and fills the little world with such a strength, and efficacy of truth, as far surpasseth the plainest theoretical principles. That one maxim, Matth. vii. 12. Luke vi. 3. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;* that one maxim, I say, (to pass others) was matter of so much wonder to some of the most polite Heathens, that they knew not well how to express their sense of the truth and glo-

ry of it; they thought it worthy to be engraven with letters of gold, upon the frontispieces of their most magnificent structures; an agreeable and speaking evidence of its having been imprinted in some measure upon their hearts. Nevertheless, all these, though sweet, strong, and convincing notices of a Deity, do yet evanish as faint glimmerings, when compared to that stamp of divine authority, which our great and alone Lawgiver has deeply imprinted upon the scriptures of truth, Psal. xix. 7. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*, &c. I enter not upon this large theme, which great men have treated to excellent purpose; I only represent very shortly, that the stupendous account we have in these scripture, of moral equity in its full compass, comprised even in ten words, that wonderful account, I say, proclaimeth its Author with so much of convincing evidence, and such strains of glory, as I cannot possibly clothe with words. The greatest men among the Heathen nations, have given the highest accounts of their accomplishments by framing laws; but besides the passing weakness of their performances, when viewed in a true light, the choicest of them all have a great deal of iniquity inlaid with them: But all here shineth with the glory of a Deity. Every duty is plainly contained within these small boundaries, and all concerns thereof in heart and way, are set down so punctually, and so fully cleared in the exposition which the Lawgiver himself has given of his own laws, that nothing is wanting. Here also are all the mysteries of iniquity in the heart so clearly and fully detected, these evils also pursued to their most latent sources, and to the grand spring of them all, viz. the corruption of our nature, and in so very few words, with so much of shining evidence and power, that no judicious and sober person can deny that the finger of God is there, unless he offer the most daring violence to his own conscience. And what shall I say of the glorious contrivance of salvation, through the Lord Jesus our only Redeemer? Should I touch at the ground work thereof in the eternal counsel of the adorable Trinity, and the several dis-

plays of it, until at length the complete purchase was made in the fulness of time; and if I should but glance at the several strokes of omnipotent power, and rich mercy through Christ, by which the purchased salvation is effectually applied to every elect person, I would enter upon a field from which I could not quickly or easily get off. All that I adventure to say is, that the discoveries of a Deity in each step thereof, are so relucent and full of glory, that the being of the material light under a meridian sun, without the interposition of a cloud, may as well be denied, as these great truths can be disowned. Beyond all manner of doubt, they contain matter of much higher, and more glorious evidence, upon the minds of all those whose eyes the god of this world hath not blinded, (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. John i. 5. Deut. xxix. 4.) Yet ah! mid-day clearness is midnight darkness to those who have not eyes. But not to insist: If we add to all these, the full history of the heart of man, in the depths of wickedness, contained in that great abyss, together with the several eruptions thereof, both open and violent, as also subtile and covered, together with all the engines of temptations for setting it to work, and keeping it still busy; if, I say, the perfect account of these things which is given in the word, be seriously pondered, who can escape the conviction, that He, and He only who formed the Spirit within him, could have given such a display. From all this, I would bewail, were it possible, with tears of blood, the blasphemous wickedness of those, who, from the grossest darkness and ignorance, oppose, malign, and deride such great and high things. But it is enough; *wisdom is justified of all her children*, Matth. xi, 19. The worthy and now glorified author of this work, had a plentiful measure, beyond many, of the surest and sweetest knowledge of these matters: his soul, (may I so express it) was cast into the blessed mould of gospel truth. Who is a teacher like unto God! Sure an enlightening work, by his word and Spirit upon the soul, filleth it with evidence of a more excellent nature, and attended with a penetrancy quite of another kind, than any mathematical demonstration can amount to. In this case, the soul (2 Cor.

iii, 3.) is an epistle of Jesus Christ, wherein these great truths are written by himself, in characters which the united force and subtilties of hell shall be so far from deleting, that their strongest efforts shall render the impressions still deeper, and more vivid. No mathematical demonstration can vie with this: forasmuch as the authority of the God of truth, that conveys his own testimony into the heart with a strong hand, has a glory and evidence peculiar to itself. And though well known to those who enjoy it, yet of a beauty great and mysterious, such as the tongues of men and angels could not suffice to describe. The empty cavils of that execrable herd of blasphemous Atheists, or Deists, as they would be called, amount to a very small and contemptible account, seeing the most subtle of them, fall very far short of the objections which unclean spirits propose, and urge in a way of temptation, against persons exercised to godliness, which yet the Father of lights dispelleth mercifully from time to time, and maketh these dark shades to evanish, as the Sun of righteousness ariseth upon the soul with a glory and evidence still upon the ascendant, Mal. iv, 2. Prov. iv, 18. Hos. vi, 3. Nevertheless, the learned and godly author hath encountered these silly creatures at their own weapons, both offensively and defensively, and to such excellent purpose, as needeth not my poor testimony. He hath searched into the very bottom of what they allege. With great and unwearied diligence did he read their writings carefully from the very first springs, and hath represented fairly their empty cavils, in all the shades of strength they can be alleged to have, and has refuted them plainly and copiously. On which, and the like accounts, I hope the work will be, through the divine blessing, of great use in the churches of Christ.

JAMES HOG.

To the Public.

IT would be superfluous for the publisher to add any thing to the highly respectable recommendations which are subjoined, as a reason for offering a new American edition of the following work to the public, or as an inducement to the pious and reflecting portion of community to patronize the undertaking. If, unhappily, the enemies of Christianity are, at this period, uncommonly active and zealous in propagating their pernicious doctrines, it becomes the peculiar duty of every one who feels the importance of religion, to encourage the circulation of a work so well calculated as this to check the progress of infidelity, and to promote the cause of truth and virtue.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

WE consider Professor HALYBURTON's celebrated work, on the INSUFFICIENCY OF NATURAL RELIGION, AND THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION, as on the whole, the best manual on the subject of which it treats, now extant. The author, not less illustrious for his talents and learning, than for his piety, has not contented himself, like most modern writers on the Deistical controversy, with merely standing on the defensive; but has "carried the war," as one of his eulogists expresses it, "into the camp of the adversary;" proving, by "unanswerable arguments," as another has pronounced, "the utter insufficiency of the Deist's religion for the salvation of them, and beating them fairly at their own weapons." We rejoice to hear that Mr. SOUTHWICK proposes to give a new

American edition of this excellent work. Were its merits generally known, all recommendation would be unnecessary.

SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.
JOHN B. ROMEYN, D. D.
PHILIP MILLEDOLER,
GARDNER SPRING,
HENRY P. STRONG,
Pastors of the Presbyterian Church.

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JOHN McNIECE,
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Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in the City of Albany.

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Minister of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in the City of Albany.

ELIPHALET NOTT, D. D.
President of Union College, Schenectady.

ALEXANDER MONTEITH,
Pastor of the 1st Presbyterian Church in the city of Schenectady.

New-York, May, 1812.

ACCUSTOMED from my earliest years, to hear the name of HALYBURTON mentioned with the highest respect, and his EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DEISTS OF HIS *own time*, greatly extolled, both by the pious and by the learned of his own Church, and

after repeated and frequent perusals of this judicious and profound treatise, I cordially unite in the character and encomiums given above; and with becoming deference, earnestly recommend the careful and patient study of it to all, but especially to the youth of our own country.

JOHN McDONALD,
Pastor of the United Presbyterian Church in the City of Albany.

Albany, May 26, 1812.

TO THE READER.

READER,

WHOEVER thou art, the question agitated in the ensuing discourse is that wherein thou hast a considerable concernment. If thou art a Christian, the ensuing discourse is designed to justify thy refusal of that religion which has now got a great vogue amongst those gentlemen, who set up for the only *wits*, and aim at monopolizing reason, as if they alone were the *people*, and *wisdom was to die with them*. They cry up their religion as the only reasonable religion, and traduce all who will not join with them, as credulous and unreasonable men. Whereas, on the contrary, no man that uses his reason, can close with that which they would obtrude on us as rational religion: nor can any man, without being guilty of the fondest credulity, venture his salvation upon this modern Paganism, that struts abroad under the modish name of *Deism*, which I hope the ensuing discourse will evince; wherein it is made appear, that the *light of nature is utterly insufficient to answer the great ends of religion*, and that consequently we had the justest reason in the world, if there were none, to wish for a revelation from God, as what is of absolute necessity to our happiness; and since there is one, with the greatest thankfulness to embrace it, cleave to it and comply with it.

Reader, if thou hast thy religion yet to choose, which I am afraid is too common a case in this unstable age, then it is high time thou wert bethinking thyself of religion in earnest.

> To-morrow thou wilt live, thou still dost say;
> To-day's too late, the wise liv'd yesterday.

And if after too long a delay thou mean to avoid an unhappy choice, reason advises thee to consider well, that when the choice is made, care be taken to make it so, as to prevent the necessity of either a second choice, or a too late repentance for choosing amiss. There is a set of men, who cry up at this day natural religion, and especially commend it to such as have no religion. It is such as thou art that they desire to deal with, and among such it is that they are most successful. But if thou hast a mind not to be deceived in a matter of such moment, it imports thee not a little to consider what may be said against that, which it is likely may be offered thee, as a fine, modish, reasonable religion, meet for a *gentleman*, a man of *wit* and *reason*. I have here offered to prove this all to be said without, yea against *reason* and *experience*. Well, first hear and then judge, and after that choose or refuse as thou seest cause.

As for the management of this useful inquiry, it is wholly suited to that which at first was only designed, viz. the satisfaction of the writer's own mind about the question that is here proposed. I entered not upon this inquiry with a view to oppose any man, or triumph over adversaries, and so did industriously wave those catches, subtleties, and other nicities, used frequently by writers of controversy. My only design was to find the truth, and therefore I chose clearly to state the question, which I found the Deists always avoided, and plainly propose my reasons for that side of it I took, after trial, to be the truth. As to the opposite opinion, I made it my business to make a diligent inquiry into the strongest arguments advanced for it, candidly to propose them in their utmost force, and closely to answer them; avoiding, as much as might be, such reproaches as are unworthy of a

Christian, or an inquirer after truth, though I met with frequent provocation, and found sometimes how true that is, *Difficile est non scribere satyram contra satyram.**

It was not amusement I aimed at, or to please my own fancy, or tickle the reader's ears with a gingle of words, or divert and bias the judgment by a flood of rhetoric. I never designed to set up for an orator. My business lies quite another way, it is what I lay no claim to, and what I think is to be avoided in discourses of this kind. All I aimed at as to language, was to clothe my thoughts in plain and intelligible expressions. The reader is to expect no more, and if he miss this I hope it will be but rarely.

It is not to be expected, that a discourse which was begun in an inverted order, the middle part being first writ; and that was composed in the intervals of business of a very different nature, at spare hours, by one of no great experience, and an utter stranger to writings of this sort, shall be free of blemishes that may offend nicer palates. Some few repetitions could not, at least without more pains in transcribing than I had either leisure or inclination for, well be avoided. Nor could a discourse so often interrupted by other business, and upon so very different subjects, be carried on with that equality of style that were to be wished, especially by one who was never over much an affecter of elegancy of language. In a word, the work is long, much longer than I designed; and yet without wronging the subject, at least as I am otherwise situated and engaged, I could not easily shorten it. If he pleases to inspect the book, he may possibly find, that I had reason for insisting at the length I have done. However, every one has not the art of him, who could enclose Homer's Iliads in a nut's shell.

I am sensible, that what I have discoursed in the first chapter of the ensuing treatise, concerning the *Occasions of Deism*, will grate hard upon a set of men, who have for many years bygone carried all before them, and so have taken it ill to have any censures bestowed on them, though

* "It is difficult not to write a satire against satire."

they did severely animadvert upon the real or supposed faults of others. As to this I have not much to say by way of apology. That Deism has sprung up and grows apace amongst us, is on all hands confessed. Others have offered their conjectures concerning the occasions of its increase. Why I might not offer my opinion also, I know no reason. The principal subject of the ensuing treatise suffers not, though I should herein be mistaken. In proposing my conjecture I did not pursue the interest of any party; but have freely blamed all parties. If the sticklers for the Arminian or Socinian divinity are touched, it was because I thought they were to be blamed, and therefore I have withstood them to their face. As to the tendency of their principles I have been sparing, because that debate has been sufficiently agitated in the Low Countries betwixt the contending parties. The reader who would be satisfied as to this, may peruse those who have directly managed this charge, and the answers that have been made, and judge upon the whole matter as he finds cause.* But whatever may be as to this, the manner of their management may perhaps be found less capable of a colourable defence. And it is upon this that I have principally insisted. To oppose, especially from the pulpit, with contempt, buffoonry, banter and satire, principles, that sober persons of the same persuasion do own to have at least a very plausible like foundation in the word of God, and which have been, for near sixty or seventy years after the reformation, the constant doctrine of the fathers, and sons of the church of England, and have by them been inserted into her articles, and so become a part of her doctrine,† is a practice that I do not well understand how to excuse or free from the imputation of profanity, and which hath too manifest a tendency to Atheism, to admit of any tolerable defence. The scriptures, and truths, that have any countenance in them, or opinions which they seem really to persons otherwise sober, pious and judicious, not only to teach, but to inculcate as of the

* See Arcana Arminianismi, by Videlius, and Vidēlius Ropsodus, with Videlius's Rejoinders, &c.

† See Bishop of Sarum on the Articles, Preface, page 7, 8.

highest importance, are not a meet subject for raillery; nor is the pulpit a meet place for it. This is that for which principally I have blamed them, and this I cannot retract. If they take this ill, I ask them, Have not others as much reason to take it ill, that the doctrines of the church of England taught in her articles and homilies, and professed by her learned bishops, who composed them, and by her sons for so long a tract of time, as consonant to, founded in, and grounded on the word of God, should be so petulantly traduced by wit, raillery, and declamatory invectives from the press and pulpit; and that too by those who have subscribed to these articles and homilies? This management has been complained of by sober persons of all parties, churchmen and dissenters, contra-remonstrants and remonstrants too, as I could make appear, if there were occasion for it: And why I might not also complain, I want yet to be informed. None is charged save the guilty. Others who are innocent have no reason to be angry. And perhaps, they who will be offended at this, would scarce have been pleased if I had let it alone.

In the tenth chapter of this treatise, I have opposed the opinion that asserts the Heathen world to be under a government of grace. I know it is maintained by many learned men both at home and abroad, from whose memory, if dead, or just respect, if alive, I designed not to detract. Nor did I design to list them with the Deists, whom I know to have been solidly opposed by several that were of this opinion. But yet I do think the opinion itself destitute of any solid foundation, with all deference to them, who think otherwise, either in scripture, reason or experience. And I am further of the mind, that the learned abettors of it, had never embraced an assertion, that exposes them to so many perplexing difficulties, and puts them upon a necessity of using so many, I had almost said, unintelligible distinctions for its support, if they had not been driven to it by some peculiar hypothesis in divinity which they have seen meet to embrace. If any intend to prove what I have denied, I wish it may be done by proper arguments, directly proving it, and not by advancing an hypothesis that remotely infers it,

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INTRODUCTION.

IN this sceptical age, which questions almost every thing, it is still owned as certain, that *all men must die.* If there were any place for disputing this, there are not a few, who would spare no pains to bring themselves into the disbelief of a truth, that gives them so much disturbance, in the courses they love and seem resolved to follow: But the case is so clear, and the evidence of this principle so pregnant, which is every day confirmed by new experiments, that the most resolved infidel is forced, when it comes in his way, though unwilling, to give his assent, and moan out an *Amen. The grave is the house appointed for all the living.* Some arrive sooner, some later; but all come there at length. The obscurity of the meanest cannot hide him, nor the power of the greatest screen him from the impartial hand of death, the executioner of fate, if I may be allowed the use of a word so much abused. As its coming is placed beyond doubt, so its aspect is hideous beyond the reach of thought, the force of expression, or the utmost efforts of the finest pencil in the most artful hand. It, in a moment, dashes down a fabric, which has more of curious contrivance than all the celebrated pieces put together, which the most refined human wits have invented, even when carried to the greatest height, which the improvements of so many subsequent generations, after the utmost application and diligence, could bring them to. It puts a stop to many thousand motions, which, though strangely diversified, did all concur, with wonderful exactness, to maintain, and carry on the design and intendment of the glorious and divine Artificer. How this divine and wonderful machine was first erected, set a going, and has, for so long a track of time, regularly performed all its motions, could never yet be understood by the most elevated understandings. *Canst thou tell how the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child,* is a challenge to all the sons of science, to unfold the mystery? Many have accepted it, but all have been foiled. Something they could say; but, in spite of it all, the thing that they

found a mystery, they left so still. How can one then look on the dissolution of so admirable a contrivance, a machine so curious, and so far surpassing human art, without the deepest and most sensible regret. It untwists that mysterious tie, whereby soul and body were so fast linked together; breaks up that intimate and close correspondence, that entire sympathy which was founded thereon; dislodges an old inhabitant; and while it lingers, being unwilling to remove, *death* pulls that curious fabric, wherein it dwelt, down about its ears, and so forces it thence, to take up its lodgings, it can scarce tell where. And upon its removal, that curious fabric, that a little before was full of life, activity, vigour, order, warmth, and every thing else that is pleasant, is now left a dead, inactive, cold lump, a disordered mass of loathsome matter, full of stench and corruption. Now the body is a spectacle so hideous, that they who loved, and who embraced it before, cannot abide the sight or smell of it; but shut it up in a coffin, and not content with that, away they carry it and lodge it amongst worms, and the vilest insects in the bowels of the earth, to be consumed, devoured, torn and rent by the most abominable vermin that lodge in the grave.

*Quantum mutatus ab illo.**

We have all heard of the afflictions of Job. Two or three messengers arrive, one after the other, and still the last is worst. Every one tells his story. The first is sad; but those that follow are still more melancholy. The disasters are so terrible, that they fill the world with just astonishment. And yet after all, what is this to *death*, which alone is able to furnish subject, more than enough, for some thousands of such melancholy messages! One might bring the dying man the melancholy tidings, that he is divested of all his beneficial, pleasant, and honorable employments: While he is yet speaking, another might be ready to bid him denude himself of all his possessions: A third, to continue the tragedy, might assure him that there is a commission issued out to an impartial hand, to tear him from the embraces of his dear relations, without regarding the hideous outcries of a loving wife, the meltings of tender infants, the intercessions of dear friends: While others continuing still the mournful scene, might assure him that he was no more to relish the fragrancy of the spring, or taste the delights of the sons of men, or see the pleasant light of the sun, or hear the charming airs of music, or the yet more useful converse of friends. And to make the matter sadder still, if it can well be so, the story might be shut up with a rueful account of the parting of soul and body, with all the horrible disasters that follow upon this parting.

* "How greatly changed from what it once was."

Thus the case evidently stands. Not a tittle of all this admits of debate. To every man it may be said, *De te fabula narratur.** What a wonder is it, that so grave and important a subject is so little in the thoughts of men? What apology can be made for the folly of mankind, who are at so much pains to shelter themselves against lesser inconveniences, quite overlooking this, which is of infinitely greater consequence?

Here is the *light-side* of death, which every body may see.—What a rueful and astonishing prospect doth it give us? Where shall we find comfort against that dismal day, whereon all this shall be verified in us? He is something worse than a fool or madman, that will not look to this. And he is yet more mad that thinks, that rational comfort in such a case can be maintained upon dark, slender and conjectural grounds.

It is certain, that which must support, must be something on the *other side of time.* The one side of death affords nothing but matter of terror; if we are not enabled to look forward, and get such a sight of the other as may balance it, we may reasonably say, that *it had been better for us never to have been born.*

Undoubtedly, therefore, no question is so useful, so necessary, so noble, and truly worthy the mind of man as this: What shall become of me after death? What have I to look for on the other side of that awful change?

Those arts and sciences which exercise the industry and consideration of the greater part of the thinking world, are calculated for time, and aim at the pleasure or advantage of a present life. It is *religion* alone that directly concerns itself in the important question last mentioned, and pretends to offer comforts against the melancholy aspect of death, by securing us in an up-making for our losses on the other side of time. Men, who are not blind to their own interest, had need therefore to take care of the choice of their *religion.* If they neglect it altogether, as many now do, they forfeit all prospect of relief. If they chuse a wrong one, that is not able to reach the end, they are no less unhappy. The world may call them *wits*, or what else they please, who either wholly neglect and laugh over all inquiries after *religion*, or who superficially look into matters of this nature, and pass a hasty judgment: But sober reason will look on them as *somewhat below the condition of the beasts that perish.*

It is somewhat to be regretted, that the bulk of mankind found their principles, as well as practice and hopes, on no better bottom than *education*, which gives but too just occasion for the smart reflection of the witty, though profane poet:

> By education most have been misled;
> So they believe, because they were so bred.

* "It is of you that the story is told."

> The priest continues what the nurse began:
> And thus the child imposes on the man.*

Most part seek no better reason for their belief and practice than custom and education. Whatever these offer in principle, they greedily swallow down, and venture all on so weak a bottom. And this sure is one of the great reasons why so many miscarry in this important matter. It is true, in this inquiring age, many, especially of the better quality, scorn this way. But it is to be feared that the greater part of them, flying to one extreme, as is common in such cases, have lighted on another and a worse one, if not to themselves, yet certainly of more pernicious consequence to the public. They set up for *wits* and *men of sense*. They pretend to have found out great mistakes in the principles of their education, the religion of their country; and thence, without more ado, reject it in bulk, and turn *sceptics* in religion. And yet after all this noise, most of them neither understand the religion they reject, nor know they what to substitute in its room, which is certainly an error of the worst consequence imaginable to the public; since men once arrived at this pass, can never be depended on. Men may talk what they please. A man of no religion is a man not to be bound, and therefore is absolutely unmeet for any share in society, which cannot subsist, if the sacred ties of religion hold it not together.

But in whatever course such persons, on the one hand or other, steer, the more considerate and better part of mankind, in matters of so high importance, will, with the nicest care, try all, that they may *hold fast what is good*. If a man once understands the importance of the case, he will find reason to look some deeper, and think more seriously of this matter, than either the *unthinking generality*, who receive all in bulk, without trial, as it is given them, or, the forward *would-be-wits*, that oftentimes are guilty of as great, and much more pernicious credulity in rejecting all, as the other in receiving all.

But whereas there are so many different *religions* in the world, and all of them pretend to conduct us in this important inquiry; which of them shall we chuse? The *Deists*, to drive us into their religion, which consists only of five articles, agreed to, as they pretend, by all the world, would persuade us, that a choice is impossible to be made of any particular religion, till we have gone through, with such a particular examination of every pretender, and all things that can be said for or against it, as no man is able to make. *Blount* tells us, as *Herbert* before had done, That "unless a man "read all authors, speak with all learned men, and know all languages, "it is impossible to come to a clear solution of all doubts."† And so

* Dryd. *Hind* and *Panther*.

† Blount's *Religio Laici*, pag. 91. Herbert's *Religio Laici*, pag. 12.

in effect, it is pretended impossible to be satisfied about the truth of any particular religion. If this reasoning did hold, I should not doubt to make it appear, that no truth whatever is to be received; and in particular, that their so much boasted *catholic religion*, cannot rationally be entertained by any man. If we can be satisfied upon rational grounds about no truth, till we have heard and considered all, that not only has been said, but may be alleged against it; what truth can we believe? Here it is easy to observe that some cannot do ought, unless they overdo. The intendment of such reasoning is obvious: Some men would cast us loose as to all religion, that we may be brought under a necessity to take up with any fancy they shall be pleased to offer us; a man that is sinking will take hold of the most slender twig. The Papists have vigorously pursued this course in opposition to the Protestants, to drive them into the arms of their *infallible guide*. And indeed the learned Herbert's reasonings on this point, after whom the modern Deists do but copy, seem to be borrowed from the Romanists, and are urged in a design not unfavorable to the church of Rome, of which perhaps more afterwards.

But to wave this thin sophistry; any one that will, with a suitable application, engage in the consideration of what religion he is to chuse, will quickly find himself eased of this unmanageable task, which the Deists would set him. His inquiry will soon be brought to a narrow compass, and the pretenders, that will require any nice consideration, will be found very few.

For a very cursory consideration of *religion in the heathen world*, will give any considerate mind ground enough to rest fully assured, that the desired satisfaction as to *future happiness*, and the means of attaining it, are not thence to be expected. Here he will not find what may have the least appearance of satisfying him. The wisest of the heathens scarce ever pretended to satisfy themselves, much less others, upon these heads. All things here are dark, vain, incoherent, inconsistent, wild, and plainly ridiculous for most part; as will further appear in our progress. Their religions were, generally speaking, calculated for other purposes, and looked not so far as eternity.

Nor will it be more difficult to get over any stop that the religion of Mahomet may lay in our *inquirer's* way. Let a man seriously peruse the Alcoran, and if he has his senses about him, he cannot but there see the most pregnant evidences of the grossest, most scandalous and impudent imposture, that ever was obtruded on the world. Here he must expect no other evidence for what he has to believe, but the bare assertion of one, who was scandalously impious to that degree, that his own followers know not how to apologize for him. If you inquire for any other evidence, you

are doomed by the Alcoran to everlasting ruin, and his slaves are ordered to destroy you.* He forbids any inquiry into his religion, or the grounds of it, and therefore you must either admit in bulk the entire bundle of fopperies, inconsistencies, and shocking absurdities, that are cast together in the Alcoran, without any trial, or reject it: And in this case, no wise man will find it hard to make a choice.

After one has proceeded thus far, he may easily see, that he is now inevitably cast upon one of the four conclusions: Either 1st, He must conclude it certain that *all religion is vain*, that there is nothing to be expected after this life, and so commence *Atheist*. Or 2dly, He must conclude, that *certainty is not attainable in these things*, and so turn *Sceptic*. Or 3dly, He must pretend, that every one's *reason unassisted is able to conduct him in matters of religion*, ascertain him of future happiness, and direct as to the means of attaining it; and so set up for *natural religion* and turn *Deist*. Or 4thly, He must acquiesce in the *revealed religion* contained in the scriptures, and so turn *Christian*, or at least *Jew*.

As to the first of these courses, no man will go into it, till he has abandoned reason. An atheist is a monster in nature. That there is nothing to be expected after this life, and that man's soul dies with his body, is a desperate conclusion, *which ruins the foundation of all human happiness;* even in the judgment of the Deists themselves.† There are two material exceptions which are sufficient to deter any thinking man from closing with it.

The one is, the *hideousness of its aspect*. Annihilation is so horrible to human nature, and has so frightful a visage to men who have a desire of perpetuity inlaid in their very frame, that none can look at it seriously without the utmost dread. It is true, guilty Atheists would fain take sanctuary here; yet were they brought to think seriously of the case, they would not find that relief in it which they promise. I have been credibly informed that a gentleman of no contemptible parts, who had lived as if, indeed, he were to fear or hope nothing after time, being in prison, and fearing death, (though he escaped it and yet lives) fell a thinking seriously, when alone, of *annihilation:* And the fears of it made so deep and horrible impressions on his mind, that he professed to a gentleman, who made him a visit in prison, and found him in a grievous damp, that the thoughts of annihilation were so dreadful to him, that he had rather think of suffering a thousand years in hell. Guilty sinners, to ease their consciences, and screen them from the disquieting apprehensions of an *after-reckoning*, retreat to this, as a refuge; but they think no more about it, save only this and that in a cursory

* Alcoran, chap. 4.

† Letter to a Deist, page 125.

way, that it will free them from the punishment they dread and deserve. But if they would sedately view it, and take under their consideration all the horror of the case, their natures would recoil and shrink: It would create uneasiness instead of quiet, and increase the strait rather than relieve them from it.

Besides, which is the other exception against it, were there never so much comfort in it, as there is none, *yet it is impossible to prove that there is nothing after this life.* There is nothing that is tolerable can be said for it. None shall ever evince the certainty of the soul's dying with the body, till he has overthrown the *being of a God*, which can never be done so long as there is any thing certain among men. Further, as there is little or nothing to be said for it, so there is much to be said against it. Reason affords violent presumptions, at least, for a future state. And all the arguments which conclude for the truth of Christianity, join their united force to support the certainty of a state after this life. Till these are removed out of the way, there is no access for any to enjoy the imaginary comfort of this supposition. But who will undertake solidly to overturn so many arguments, which have stood the test of ages? They who are likely to be most forward, and favor this cause most, dare scarce allow these reasonings *a fair hearing*, which plead for a future state, for fear of rivetting the impression of the truth deeper on their minds, which they desire to shake themselves loose of. And how then will they overthrow them? In fine, he is a madman, who will admit a conclusion, whereof he can never be certain, and wherein, were it sure, he can have no satisfaction. The first forbids the *judgment*, the last dissuades the *will* and *affections* from resting in it.

As to the second conclusion above mentioned, that sets up for *scepticism* in matters of religion, and bids us live at peradventures as to what is to be feared or hoped after time: it is a course that nothing can justify save absolute necessity. It lies open to the worst of inconveniences. Nothing can be imagined more melancholy than its consequences, and the pretences for it are vain and frivolous.

If it be really thus, that man can arrive at no certainty in matters of religion, and about his state after time, how deplorable is man's condition? His case is comfortless beyond what can be well conceived. Nor can his enjoyments afford him any solid satisfaction, while ghastly death looks him in the face, and the sword hangs over his head, suspended by a hair. Will not the prospect of his rueful change (of whose dismal attendants we have given some account) embitter his sweetest enjoyments? And will not the horror of the case be much increased by resolving upon a perplexing uncertainty as to what may come hereafter? In how dismal a plight is the poor man, who on the one hand is certain of the speedy arrival of death with all his frightful attendants; and on the other, is told that he must

rove in uncertainty, till the event clear him, whether he shall be entirely annihilated, and so plunge into that horrible gulf where Atheists seek a sanctuary! or if he shall not be hurried headlong into these endless torments, which the consciences of guilty sinners, when awakened, presage; or, if he shall soar aloft into regions of endless bliss, which sinful mortals have but little reason to expect; or, finally, whether he is not to launch out into some state reducible to none of these. If here it behoves us to fix, one would not know how to evite two conclusions that are horrible to think of: "That our reason, whereby we are capable of foreseeing, and are "affected with things at a distance, is a heavy curse; and that the "profligate Atheist, who endeavors to mend this fault, in his consti- "tution, by a *continual debauch*, that never allows him to think "any more of what is certainly to come, than if he were a brute in- "capable of forethought, is the wisest man."

Beside, as was above insinuated, the pretences for this course are vain. It is true, most of those who set up for *wits* in this unhappy age, are mere sceptics in religion, who admit nothing as certain, but boldly question every thing, and live at peradventures. Yet we are not obliged to think that this scepticism is the result of serious inquiry, and the want of certainty thereon; but those gentlemen's way of living is inconsistent with serious religion; they are therefore desirous to have such a set of principles as if they favor them not in the practices they have a mind to follow, yet shall not incommode them sorely. This principle gives not absolute security of impunity; but it *seems*, and *but seems*, to justify them in their present neglect of religion, and gives them a *may be* for an escape from feared and deserved punishments; and favors that laziness that cannot search for truth, where it lies not open to the eye, even of those who care not to see it. Their practice and course of life shew them so impatient of restraints, that they love *liberty*, or rather *licentiousness*; and are not willing to come under any bonds. They greedily grasp at any difficulty that seems to make ever so little against religion;—an evidence that they bear it no real good will. They neither converse much with books, nor men, that might afford them satisfaction, in reference to their real scruples, which is proof enough that they design not to be satisfied. They are light and jocular in their converse about the most serious matters; an evidence that their desire is not to be informed. It is a good observation of the wise man, [Prov. xiv, 6.] *A scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not, but knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.* This is the real mystery of the matter with those gentlemen, whatever they may pretend.

I know they want not pretences, taking enough with the unthinking, whereby they would justify themselves in their infidelity. The principal one is, that they find it easy to load religion with abund-

ance of difficulties, not easily, if at all, capable of solution. But after all, these gentlemen use those *objections* as the *sceptics* did of old, not so much to maintain any settled principle, no not their beloved one, whereof now we speak; as to create them work, and make sport with those who would seriously confute them, and to ward off blows from themselves, who have neither principles nor practice capable of a rational defence.

It is like indeed, that sometimes they may meet with such, who although they own religion, are yet incapable of defending it against such objections. But this is no wonder, since there are weak men of all persuasions. And their weakness is not, or ought, not to be any real prejudice to the truth they maintain. Besides, every one may know that ignorance of any subject is fertile of doubts, and will start abundance of difficulties; whereas it requires a more full and exact acquaintance with the nature of things to solve them; and this falls not to every one's share.

Further, if this be allowed a reasonable exception against religion, that it is liable to exceptions not easy to be solved, it will hold good as well against all other sorts of knowledge, as against religion; yea, and I may add, it concludes much stronger; for the farther any subject is above our reach, the less reason we have to expect, that we shall be capable of solving every difficulty that may be started against it. There is no part of our knowledge, that is not incumbered with difficulties, as hard to be satisfyingly solved, as those commonly urged against religion. If this be a sufficient reason to question religion, that there are arguments which may be urged against it, not capable of a clear, or, at least, an easy solution; I doubt not, upon the same ground, to bring the gentlemen who maintain this, if they will follow out their principle, to reject the most evident truths, that we receive upon the credit of moral, metaphysical, and mathematical demonstrations; yea, or even upon the testimony of our senses. For I know few of these truths that we receive upon any of those grounds, against which a person of a very ordinary genius may not start difficulties, which perhaps no man alive can give a fair account of; and yet no man is so foolish as to call in question those truths, because he cannot solve the difficulties which every idle head may start upon those subjects. I may give innumerable instances of the difficulties wherewith other parts of human knowledge are embarrassed: I shall only hint at a few.

That matter is divisible into, or at least consists of indivisible particles, is with some a truth next to self-evident. That the quite contrary is true, and matter is divisible *in infinitum*, appears no less certain to many others.* But if either of them should pretend

* *Locke* on *Human Understanding*, edit. 5, page 207.—"I would fain have it "instanced in our notion of spirit of any thing more perplexed, or nearer a con-

themselves capable of solving the difficulties, that lie against their respective opinions, it were sufficient to make all men of sense and learning doubt of their capacity and judgment: For the difficulties on both hands are such, that no ingenuous man that understands them, will pretend himself capable of giving a fair solution of those, which press that side of the question he is inclined to.

Again, whether we will, or will not, we must believe one side, and but one side, of the question is true; that either matter is divisible *in infinitum*, or not; that it consists of indivisibles, or not; these are contradictions. And it is one of the most evident propositions that the mind of man is acquainted with, that contradictions cannot be true, or that both sides of a contradiction cannot hold. And yet against this truth, whereon much of our most certain knowledge depends, insoluble difficulties may be urged: For it may be pretended, that here both sides of the contradiction are true, and this pretence may be enforced by the arguments abovementioned, which confirm the two opposite opinions, which no mortal can answer. Shall we therefore believe that contradictions may be true?

That motion is possible I am not like to doubt, nor can I, while I know that I can rise and walk; nor is he like to doubt of it, who sees me walk. And yet I doubt not the most ingenious of our atheistical wits would find himself sufficiently straitened, were the arguments of *Zeno Eleates* against motion well urged, by a subtle disputant. I shall offer one argument against motion, which I am fully satisfied will puzzle the most subtle adversaries of religion to solve satisfyingly. There are stronger arguments proving that matter is divisible *in infinitum* than any mortal can solve or answer, though I perhaps believe it untrue. And it is as certain as the sun is in the firmament, that if matter is divisible *in infinitum*, it consists of an infinite number of parts—(what some talk of indefinite is a shelter of ignorance, and if it is used any other way than as a shield to ward off difficulties for a while in a public dispute, the users cannot be excused either of gross ignorance, rooted prejudice, or disingenuity.) This being laid down as proven, and proven it may be by arguments, which none living can satisfy, that matter is divisible *in infinitum*, and that consequently it contains an infinite number of parts. Nor is it less certain, that according to these conclusions laid down, if one body move upon the surface of another, as for instance, an inch in a minute's time, it must pass by an infinite number of parts; and it is undeniable, that it cannot pass one of

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" tradiction, than the very notion of body includes in it; the divisibility *in* " *infinitum* of any finite extension, involving us, whether we grant or deny it, " in consequences impossible to be explicated, or made in our apprehensions " consistent; consequences that carry greater difficulty, and more apparent " absurdity than any thing that can follow from the notion of an immaterial " substance."

that infinite number of parts without some portion of time. Now if so, what a vast portion of time will it require to make that little journey, which we know can be performed in a moment! Will it not evidently require an eternity! What difficulty can any urge, more difficult to be solved, against religion than this? And yet for all this he were a fool who would doubt of motion.

As to mathematical certainty though many boasts are made of the firmness of its demonstrations; yet these may, upon this ground, be called all in question. And I nothing doubt, that if men's interests, real or pretended, lay as cross to them, as they are supposed to do to the truths of a religion, many more exceptions might be made against them, than are against those, and upon full as good, if not better reason. In justification of this assertion, I might proceed to demonstrate how trifling even the definitions of geometry, the firmest of all the mathematical sciences, are. Its difinitions might be alleged, upon no inconsiderable grounds, trifling, nonsensical and ridiculous. Its demands or its postulates, declared plainly impracticable. Its axioms or self-evident propositions—controvertible, and by themselves they are controverted. Any one who would see this made good in particular instances, may consult (besides others) the learned *Huetius's Demonstratio Evangelica*, where, in the illustration of his definitions, axioms and postulates, he compares them with those of geometry, and prefers them to these, and shows they are incumbered with fewer difficulties than the other, though without derogating from the just worth and evidence of mathematical sciences. Besides what he has observed, I may add this one thing more, that those sciences deserve not any great regard, save as they are applied to the use of life, and in a subserviency to man's advantage. And when thus they are applied to practice, the difficulty is considerably increased, and they may be easily loaded with innumerable and insoluble inconveniences. For then, their definitions cease to be the definition of names, and are to be taken as the definitions of things that are actually in being. Their demands must not be practicable, but put in practice. And who sees not how many inextricable difficulties the practiser will be cast upon? The demonstration may proceed bravely so long as they hold in the theory, and mean by *Punctum, id cujus pars nulla est*;* and the same may be said of lines and surfaces, and all their figures; without obliging us to believe that really there are any such things. But when we come to the practice, they must go further, and take it for granted, that there are such points, lines, surfaces and figures. This turns what was before only an explication of a name, into the definition of a thing. And therefore I am now left at liberty to dispute, whether there is any such thing; or, whether indeed it is

* "A point, is, that which has no parts."

possible that there should be such. And who sees not now, that they are incumbered with as many difficulties as may perhaps be urged against any science whatever.

It were endless to enumerate the things we must believe, without being capable to resolve the difficulties about them. The veriest infidel must suppose that something is eternal, or all things are eternal, or that they jumped into being without any cause. Whichsoever of these positions he shall choose, he is led into a labyrinth of difficulties, from which no mortal wit can extricate him. We must all own, that either matter and motion are the principle of thought; or, that there are immaterial substances which affect matter, and are strangely affected by what befals it. Whichsoever side any shall choose, he is cast upon inextricable difficulties. Much more might be said on this head ; but what has been said is more than enough to shew, that if this course is taken, it saps the foundations of all human knowledge, and there is no part of it safe.

Besides, this way of questioning religion upon the pretence of difficulties lying against it, is contrary to the common sense of mankind, contradicts the practice of all wise men, and is inconsistent with the very nature of our faculties. For, if I have a clear unexceptionable and convincing proof for any truth, it is against all reason to reject it, because I have not so full and comprehensive knowledge of the nature and circumstances of the object, as is necessary to enable me to solve all difficulties that may occur about it: Yea, such is the nature of our faculties, that to justify in the opinion of the nicest inquirers after truth, nay, to extort an assent, clear proof is sufficient; whereas, to untie all knots, and solve all bjections, perfect and all-comprehensive knowledge is absolutely needful; which man's condition allows him not to expect about the meanest things. And the more remote any thing lies from common observation, the less reason there is still to look for a fullness of knowledge and exemption from difficulties. If therefore men will turn sceptics in religion, to justify themselves, they must attempt the proofs whereon it is grounded. Sampson-like, they must grasp the pillars that support the fabric, and pull them down. If this is not done, nothing is done. And he that will undertake this, must have a full view of their force, and find where their strength lies: Now a serious view of this will be sufficient to deter any wise man from the undertaking.

In a word, this scepticism can yield no ease or satisfaction to a reasonable soul. For if a man shall think rationally, his reason will suggest to him, that though all religion at present seems uncertain to him, yet upon trial perhaps he may find the grounds of religion so evident, that he cannot withhold his assent. This will at least oblige him to a serious inquiry into the truth. Next, in uncertainties (supposing, after serious inquiry, he still thinks the truths of

religion such) a prudent man will incline to what is most probable. Finally he will choose and steer such a course of life as will be safest, in case he shall in experience afterwards find, that there is a God, and a future state. All which shew the folly of our sceptics, and, were it seriously considered, would much mar their design, which is, thereby to justify a licentious life.

Now we have considered, and sufficiently exposed the two first branches of the abovementioned choice: and consequently every man must find himself cast upon a necessity of adopting one of these two—He must either betake himself to *natural religion*, and so turn *Deist*; or he must embrace the *scriptures*, and turn *Christian*: For as to the *Jewish religion*, it is not likely to gain many *converts*.

If therefore we are able to demonstrate the utter *insufficiency of natural religion*, in opposition to the *deists*, who set up for it, we reduce every man to this choice, that he must be a *Christian* or an *Atheist*; or, which is the same upon the matter, a man of *no religion*; for an *insufficient religion* is in effect *none*. And to demonstrate this, that *natural religion* is utterly insufficient, that unassisted reason is not able to guide us to happiness, and satisfy us as to the great concerns of religion, is the design of the subsequent sheets. In them we have clearly stated and endeavored with closeness to argue this point. We have brought the pleadings of the learned Lord *Herbert*, and the *modern deists*, who do but copy after him, to the bar of *reason*, examined their utmost force, and, if I mistake it not, found them weak and inconclusive.

As for the occasion of my engagement in this controversy, it was not such as commonly gives rise to writings of this nature. I undertook it with no design of publication. I was provoked by no adversary in particular. But every man being obliged to understand upon what grounds he receives his religion, I studied the point for my own satisfaction, and in compliance with my duty.

As for the reasons of my undertaking this part of the controversy, I shall not say much. The only wise GOD, *who has determined the times before appointed, and made of one blood all nations of men that dwell on the earth, and has appointed them the bounds of their habitation*, has cut out different pieces of work for them, cast them into different circumstances, and hereby exposed them to trials and temptations that are not of the same kind. As every man is obliged to cultivate in the best manner he can the bounds of land assigned to him, and defend his possessions; so every one is concerned to improve and defend after the best form he can, those truths, which his circumstances have obliged him to take peculiar notice of, and which his temptations, of whatever sort, have endeavoured, or may attempt to wrest out of his hands.

Besides, we live in a warlike age, wherein every one must be of a party in matters of religion. And religion is a cause in which,

when disputed, no man is allowed to stand neutral. As all are concerned to choose the right side, so every one is obliged to provide himself with the best armour his arsenal can afford, both for the defending himself and others that own the same cause, and to annoy the common enemy. Nor is this work peculiarly confined unto those, who by office are obliged to it: For *in publico discrimine, est omnis homo miles.**

Besides, it is well known, that the most bold attempt that ever was made upon revealed religion, since the entrance of Christianity into the world, has been made, in our day, by men, who have set up for *natural religion*, and who have gone over from *Christianity* unto *refined Paganism*; under the name of *Deism*. Two things they have attempted;—to overthrow *revelation*, and to advance *natural religion*. The last work has been undertaken, I may without breach of charity boldly say it, not so much out of any real affection to the principles or duties of natural religion, as to avoid the *odium* inevitably following upon a renunciation of all religion; and because they saw that men would not easily quit Christianity, without something were substituted in its room, that might at least have the name of religion. *Revealed religion* has been worthily defended by many, of old and of late, at home and abroad; but the *insufficiency of natural religion* has been less insisted on, at least in that way that is necessary to straiten an obstinate adversary. And several things incline me to think an attempt of this nature seasonable, if not necessary, at this time.

The times are infectious, and Deism is the contagion that spreads. And that which has carried many, particularly of our unwary youth of the better quality, off their feet, and engaged them to espouse this cause,—is the high pretence that this way makes to *reason*. They tell us, that their religion is entirely reasonable, and that they admit nothing, save what this dictates to them, and they endeavor to represent others as easy and credulous men. Now I thought it meet to demonstrate, for undeceiving of such, that none are more credulous, none have less reason upon their side, than they who set up for *rational religion*.

Again, we have stood sufficiently long upon the defensive part, we have repulsed their efforts against *revelation*. It seems now seasonable, that we should act offensively, and try how they can defend their own religion, and whether they can give as good account of it as has been given of Christianity. To stand always upon the defensive part, is to make the enemy doubt ours, and turn proud of their own strength.

The reasonableness of this will further appear, if we consider the quality of the adversaries we have to do with, and their manner of management. The enemies who have engaged revealed religion,

* "In a time of public danger every man is a soldier."

sensible of their own weakness to defend themselves at home, and endure close fight, do commonly make inroads, where they expect none, or a faint resistance. They design not so much to conquer, as to disturb. Jest, buffoonry, or at best sophisms, and such little artifices, are the arguments they use, and the weapons of their warfare. The best way to make such rovers keep at home is, to carry the war into their own country, and to ruin those retreats they betake themselves to when attacked. They have seen what Christians can say in defence of *revealed religion*. It is now high time to see how they can acquit themselves on behalf of *natural religion*. It is easy to impugn. It is a defence that gives the best proof of the defender's skill, and says most for the cause he maintains.

I own indeed that most who have evinced the truth of revealed religion, have said something of the weakness of natural religion. But this has only been by the bye, and in a way too loose to straiten obstinate opposers, not to speak of the too large concessions that have been made them by some.

Finally, *natural religion* being the only retreat, to which the apostates from Christianity betake themselves, and whereby they think themselves secured from the imputation of plain *atheism*, it is hoped, that a full and convincing discovery of its weakness, may incline such as are not quite debauched, to look how they quit Christianity, and engage with that which, if this attempt is successful, must henceforward pass for *disguised Atheism*.

It now only remains, that I offer some account of the reasons that have induced me to manage this controversy in a method so far different from that which is commonly used. The reasons of this have been above insinuated, and I shall not insist much further on them, lest I should seem to detract from performances to which I pay a very great regard. The method some have chosen, in managing this controversy with the Deists, to me appears inconvenient. They begin with an endeavor to establish the grounds of *natural religion*, and by the help of light borrowed from *revelation*, they carry the matter so far, and extend natural religion to such a compass, that it looks pretty complete-like; which has too evident a tendency to lessen its *real defects*, and make them *appear* inconsiderable.

Again, I am afraid that some have gone near to give up the whole cause. This fault I would be very loth to charge upon all. Many I know have dealt faithfully in it, and deserve praise. But how to excuse some in this case I know not. One tells us that, "It is "true indeed that natural religion declares and comprises all the "parts of religion, that are generally and in all times either neces- "sary or requisite!"* And much more to the same purpose. This is much such another assertion of the weakness of natural re-

* Discourse concerning Natural and Revealed Religion, by Stephen Nye, Part 2, Chap. 1. page 97.

ligion against the Deists, as the same author gives us of the *perfection of the scriptures*, in opposition to the same persons in another place of his book. "I could," says he "prove, I think, by unde- "niable, unavoidable instances,"† what Mr. Gregory of Oxford says in his preface to some critical notes on the scriptures that he published, viz. "That there is no author whatsoever that has suf- "fered so much by the hand of time as the Bible has." Is this the way to overthrow the sufficiency of natural religion, and to defend the scriptures? This is not the only remark I could make upon this author, were it my design. But this may let us see how necessary it is to deal a little more plainly with the assertors of natural religion.

Further, to adorn natural religion with the improvements borrowed from *revelation*, is the ready way to furnish those who set up for its *sufficiency*, with pretences to serve their design, and to straiten themselves, when they come to shew its defects. And perhaps I should not mistake it far, if I asserted, that the strongest arguments urged by Deists, have been drawn from unwary concessions made them by their adversaries.

And this is the more considerable, that the persons, with whom we have to do in this controversy, are, generally speaking, either of no great discernment, or of small application; who have no great mind to wait upon the business, or look to the bottom of it. Now when such persons find many things granted, they are ready to think all is yielded, and so run away with it, as if the cause were their own. That such concessions have done no good service, there is too much reason to believe. This I am sure of, it would have been long before the Deists could have trimmed up natural religion so handsomely, and made it appear so *like a sufficient religion*, as some have done, who meant no such thing.

Finally, the apostle Paul's method is doubtless most worthy of imitation, who, when he is to prove justification by faith, and to enforce an acceptance of it, first strongly convinces of sin, and then urges the utter insufficiency of works for accomplishing that purpose. The best way in my opinion, to engage men to close with *revealed religion*, is strongly to argue the *insufficiency* of *natural religion*.

As to the performance itself, and what I have therein attained, I am not the competent judge. Every reader must judge as he sees cause. I have not the vanity to expect that it should please every body. The vast compass of the subject, the variety of the purposes, the uncommonness of many, if not most of them, with respect to which I was left to walk in untrodden paths, and other difficulties of a like nature, with candid and judicious readers will go a great way towards my excuse in lesser escapes. As for the substance of the ensuing discourse, I am bold to hope, that upon the strictest trial it shall be found true, and that it is pleaded for in words of truth and soberness.

† *Ubi supra*, page 199.

AN INQUIRY, &c.

CHAP. I.

Giving a short account of the rise, occasions, and progress of Deism, especially in England; the opinions of the Deists, and the different sorts of them.

THERE is no man, who makes it his concern to understand what the state of religion has, of late years, been, and now is, particularly in these nations, but knows that *Deism* has made a considerable progress. Since therefore it is against those who go under *this name*, that this undertaking is designed, it is highly expedient, if not plainly necessary, that in the entry, we give some account of the *occasions* and *rise* of *Deism*, the principal opinions of the *Deists*, and some other things that may tend to clear the matter discoursed in the subsequent sheets.

It is not necessary that we inquire more largely into the causes of that general defection in *principle* and *practice* from the *doctrine* of the *gospel* which now every where obtains; this has been judiciously done by others.

Nor will it be needful to write at length the *history* of *deism*. This I think impracticable, because the growth of this *sect* has been very secret, and they have generally disguised their opinions: And perhaps till of late, they scarce had any settled opinion in matters of religion, if yet they have. But though it were practicable, as it is not, yet it is not necessary to our present undertaking; and if it were attempted, would require more helps, and more leisure, besides other things, than I am master of.

One has of late written a pamphlet bearing this title, "An Account of the Growth of Deism in England."* The author of it is not a deist, yet has done what in him lies to promote their cause, by setting off, with all the art and address he is master of, those things which he says have tempted many to turn deists, without any attempt to antidote the poison of them.

* Printed anno. 1690.

Another has wrote *Reflections* upon this pamphlet, wherein he has sufficiently shewn, that those alleged by the former author, were not sufficient reasons to justify any in turning deist. But I conceive that is not the main question. If he had a mind to disprove the other author, he should have made it appear, that the particulars condescended upon by his antagonist, had no real influence into this apostacy. Whether they gave a just cause for it is another question. I am satisfied they did not. But neither do those *reasons* of this defection, condescended on by the *reflector*, give a sufficient ground for it. Nor are there any reasons that can justify any in relinquishing Christianity. The inquiry in this case is not, what just grounds have the deists to warrant them in, or engage them to this defection, for all christians own it impossible they should have any; but the question is, what has given occasion to any, thus to fall off from our religion? Now I conceive both these writers have hit upon several of the *true reasons* of this; though the first is apparently guilty of *deep imprudence*, I wish I might not say *malice*, against Christianity, in proposing those temptations, with all the advantage he could give them, and that without any antidote: For which and other faults he has been justly, though modestly censured by the *reflector*.

Although both of them have given some account of this matter, yet I conceive so much has not been said as may supercede a further inquiry, or make us despair of observing not a few things that have not had an inconsiderable influence, which are overlooked by both. Wherefore we shall in a few words propose our opinion of this matter. And in delivering it, we shall not pursue the design of any *party*, but make it evident that *all parties* have had their own accession to the *growth* of this *evil*. Though I am sensible that this account will fall heavy upon a *set* of men in particular, who have of late years claimed the name of the *Church of England*; though unjustly, if we take her Homilies, Articles, and consentient judgment of her renowned bishops from the time of the Reformation to Bishop Laud's time, for the standard of her doctrine;* and I see no reason why we ought not. I premised this to avoid any suspicion of a design to brand the Church of England, with an accession to the *growth of Deism*. And even in speaking of that *set* of men, whom I take to be principally guilty, I would not be understood to speak so much of the *design* of the men, as of the *native tendency* of their *doctrine* and *practices*.

The many groundless, nay ridiculous pretences to *revelation*, and bold impostures of the Church of Rome, and of those who have supported that interest; their impudence in obtruding upon

* See Bishop of Sarum's Explanation of the Thirty-nine Articles, on art. 17, p. 168.

the world, doctrines cross to *reason* and *sense*, and principles of *morality* subversive of the *whole law of nature*;† their scandalous endeavour to bespatter the scriptures, and weaken their authority, on purpose to bring them into discredit, to make way for the designed advancement of their *wild traditions* into an equality with them, and to bring the world under a necessity of throwing themselves upon the care and conduct of their *infallible guide*, though they cannot yet tell us which is he; their gross and discernible hypocrisy in carrying on secular, nay impious and unjust designs, under the specious pretences of *holiness* and *religion*; their zeal for a *form* and *shew of religion*, a worship plainly *theatrical*,‡ while the lives of their Popes, Cardinals, Monks, Nuns, and all their highest pretenders to devotion have been scandalously lewd, even to a proverb;‖ the *immoral morality*, *atheistical divinity*, and *abominable practices* of the Jesuits, those zealous supporters and strongest props of the Popish interest, but in very deed the worst enemies of mankind, the subverters of all *true piety*, *morality*, and *government* in the world; these, I say, together with many other evils of a like nature, every where observable in that church, have been, for a very long time too evident and gross to be denied, or hid from persons of any tolerable sagacity, living among them: And, by the observation of those and the like evils, continued in, approved, justified, and adhered unto; and the cruelty of that church in destroying all those who would not receive, by wholesale, all those shocking absurdities, not a few who lived among them, and were unacquainted with the power of religion, that was necessary to engage them cordially to espouse the reformed interest, got their minds leavened with prejudices, and furnished with specious pretences against all revealed religion; which they the more boldly entertained, because they knew it was less criminal to turn *Athiest* than *Protestant* in places where the Popish interest prevailed.

These prejudices once taken up, daily grew stronger, by the observation of new instances of this sort, and the constancy of those of that communion in acting the same part. And men of wit and learning, who soonest saw into this mystery, and had no inward bonds on them, failed not to hand about and cultivate those pretences to that degree, that many begun to own their apostacy, if not openly, yet more covertly.

Not long after the beginning of the last elapsed century, so far as I can learn, some in France and Italy began to form a sort of a new party. They called themselves *Theists*, or *Deists*; unjustly pretending that they were the only persons who owned the *One true*

† Growth of Deism, p. 5. Reflections on it, p. 8.
‡ See Jesuit's Morals.
‖ Clarkson's Practical Divinity of Papists.

God. And hereby they plainly intimated that they had rejected the name of *Christ.* They rejected all *revelation* as *cheat, priest-craft,* and *imposture,* pretending that there was nothing sincere in religion, save what *nature's light* taught. However, being generally persons too fond of a present life, and too uncertain about a future, they thought it not meet to put too much to the hazard for this their *pretended religion.* It was a refined sort of Paganism which they embraced, and they were to imitate the Heathen philosophers, who, whatever their peculiar sentiments were in matters of religion, yet for peace's sake, they looked on it as safe to follow the mode, and comply with the religious usages that prevailed in the places where they lived. That which made this party the more considerable was that it was made up of men, who pretended to learning, ingenuity, breeding, and who set up for *wits.* They pretended to write after the copy of the new philosophers, who scorned that philosophical slavery, which former ages had been under to Aristotle. They inculcated that credulity was no less dangerous in matters of religion than in matters of philosophy. And herein certainly they were not mistaken. But one may justly suspect, that at the same time, while they pretended to guard against easiness in believing, they have fallen into the worst *credulity,* as well as ruining *incredulity:* For none is so credulous as an atheist.

Much about the same time, some novel opinions began to be much entertained in Holland, in matters of religion. The broachers of them being men learned and diligent, carefully cultivated them, till they were ripened into something very near-akin to plain Socinianism, which is but one remove from Deism. It was not long after this when those new-fangled notions took footing in England and began to be embraced and countenanced by some *topping churchmen,* who, forgetful of their Articles, Homilies, and Subscriptions, and the conduct of their predecessors, carefully maintained and zealously propagated this new divinity.

I shall not make bold to judge what the designs of those were, who appeared most zealous for these new notions: This is to be left to the judgment of him, who *searches the heart of the children of men, and will bring forth things that are now hid.* But there were not a few reasons to suspect that the Jesuits had a considerable hand in disseminating them, and that the others were their tools; though it is likely they did not suspect this. The Jesuits vaunted that they had planted the *sovereign drug* of Arminianism in England, which in time would purge out the *northern heresy.** This it could not otherwise do, than by shaking men as to all principles of religion. And it is a known maxim, that *make men once Atheists*

* Rushworth's Collect. Part 1, pag. 475. Letter by a Jesuit to the Rector of Brussels. See pag. 62, *ibid.*

it will be easy to turn them Papists. The jealousies many discerning people had of this, were considerably increased when it was seen with what violence the abettors of this new divinity appeared against the more moderate part of the church of England, as well as the dissenters, upon the account of some *ceremonies*, owned by themselves as indifferent in their own nature; while at the same time, they expressed a great deal of tenderness if not respect to the Church of Rome, and made proposals for *union* with her.

But whatever there is as to this, it is certain that this divinity opens a door, and has given encouragement to that apostacy from Christianity, that has since followed, and still increases under the name of *Deism.*

This divinity teaches us, that no more is necessary to be believed, in order to salvation, save what is confessed and owned by all that are called christians. *Dicunt se non videre unde, aut quo modo, præter pauca ista, quæ apud omnes in confesso sunt, alia plura adhuc necessaria esse ostendi aut elici possit;** that is, "They see not how it can be made appear, that besides these "few things, which are by them allowed, any others are necessary "to salvation." Consonantly hereto, they expressly deny any thing to be *fundamental* which has been controverted, or afterwards may be so.† In a word they teach that we are not necessarily to believe any thing, save what is evident to us. And that only is to be reckoned evident, which is confessed by all, and to which nothing that has any appearance of truth can be opposed. Now after this, what is left in *Christianity?* The *divinity*, the *purity*, the *perfection* and *sufficiency* of the *scriptures;* the *Trinity*, *Deity of Christ, his satisfaction, the whole dispensation of the Spirit, justification by faith alone*, and all the *articles* of the *Christian religion*, have been and are controverted. None of them therefore is necessary to salvation. Are not men left at liberty, without hazard of their salvation, to renounce all, save what is common to *Christianity* with *natural religion?* And since even some of its most considerable articles about the *attributes* of GOD and his *providence, future rewards* and *punishments*, have been, or may be controverted, why may we not reckon them unnecessary too? The *Deists* have borrowed their *doctrine of evidence*, and opposed it to the *Christian religion.* One of them tells us, "If our happiness "depends upon our belief, we cannot firmly believe, till our reason "be convinced of a supernatural religion."‡ And if the reasons of it were evident, there could be no longer any contention about religion. How little does this differ from that divinity which tells us,

* Remonstr. Apol. Fol. 12.
† *Ibi.* Cap. 24, Fol. 276; and Cap. 25, Fol. 283.
‡ Oracles of Reason, pag. 206. Letter by A. W. to C. Blount.

that GOD is obliged to offer us such arguments to which nothing that has *an appearance of truth* can be opposed! And if this be wanting, they are not to be received as *articles of faith*. Now if after this the Deists can but offer any thing that has an appearance of truth against Christianity, they are free to reject it *in cumulo*.

This divinity reduces Christianity to *mere morality*. Nothing else is universally agreed to, if that be so. "The supposition of "sin, (says one that wore a mitre) does not bring in any new reli-"gion, but only makes new circumstances and names of old things, "and requires new helps and advantages to improve our powers, "and to encourage our endeavors; And thus the *law of grace* is "nothing but a restitution of the *law of nature*."*

And further, lest we should think this morality, wherein they place the whole of Christianity, owes its *being* to the agency of the sanctifying Spirit, we are told, that "the Spirit of God, and "the grace of Christ, when used as distinct from moral abilities "and performances, signify nothing."† And a complaint is made of some who fill the world "with a buz and noise of the di-"vine Spirit."‡ Hence many sermons were rather such as became the chair of a philosopher, teaching *ethicks*, than that of one, who by office is bound to *know* and preach *nothing save Christ and him crucified*. Heathen morality has been substituted in the room of gospel holiness. And ethicks by some have been preached instead of the gospel of Christ. And if any complaints were made of this conduct, though by men who preached the necessity of holiness, urged by all the gospel motives, and carefully practised what they preached in their lives, they were exposed and rejected, and the persons who offered them were reflected on as enemies to *morality*; whereas the plain truth of the case was, they did not complain of men being taught to be moral, but that they were not taught somewhat more.

After men once were taught that the controverted doctrines of religion were not necessary to salvation, and that all that was necessary thereto was to be referred to and comprehended under *morality*, and that there was no need of *regeneration*, or the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of Christ in order to the performance of our duty, it is easy to see how light the difference was to be accounted betwixt a *Christian* and an honest *moral Heathen*. And if any small temptation offered, how natural was it for men to judge that the hazard was not great, to step over from *Christianity* to *Deism*, which is *Paganism a-la-mode*. And to encourage them to it, it is well known how favourably many used to ex-

* S. Park's Defence of Eccles. Poli. pag. 324.
† *Idem ibid*, pag. 343.
‡ Eccles. Polit. pag. 57.

press themselves of the state of the Heathens; little minding that the Christian religion represents them as *without God*, and *without Christ*, and *without hope*, *children of wrath*, and *dead in trespasses and sins*.

I need not stand to prove that this divinity is nearly allied to Socinianism. It is well known that they reckon the Socinians sound in the fundamentals, and therefore think them in no hazard, provided they live morally. Hence men have been emboldened to turn Socinians. And every body may see by what easy removes, one may from Socinianism arrive at *Deism*. For my part I can see little difference betwixt the two. The Deist indeed seems the honester man of the two; he rejects the gospel, and owns that he does so: The other, I mean the Socinian, pretends to retain it. But I shall not insist any further in discovering the tendency of this *new divinity* to *libertinism* and *Deism*, since others have fully and judiciously done it from the most unquestionable arguments and documents. And more especially, since in fact it is evident, that wherever this new divinity has obtained, Socinians and deists abound, and many who embrace it daily go over to them; which I take to be the surest evidence, if it be duly circumstantiate, of the tendency of this doctrine to encourage those opinions, and least liable to any just exception. And perhaps I might add, that few, comparatively very few, who own the contrary doctrine, have gone into this new way, where that divinity has not been entertained.

But to return whence we have for a little digressed, to the state of religion in England. No sooner were they advanced to *power* who had drunk in those opinions, but presently the doctrines that are purely evangelical, by which the apostles converted the world, the reformers promoted and carried on our reformation from Popery, and the pious preachers of the church of England did keep somewhat of the life and power of religion amongst their people; these doctrines, I say, began to be decryed; justification by the righteousness of Christ, which Luther called *Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*,* that *redemption that is in him, even the forgiveness of sins through faith in his blood;* the mystery of the grace, mercy and love of God manifested in Christ; the great mystery of godliness; the dispensation of the Spirit for conviction, renovation, sanctification, consolation and edification of the church, by a supply of spiritual gifts, and other doctrines of a like tendency, were, upon all occasions, boldly exposed, and discredited in press and pulpit. The ministers who dared to avow them, from a conviction of the truth, the sense of the obligation of their promises and subscriptions to the Articles, were sure to have no preferment, nay, to be

* "An article by which the Church must either stand or fall."

branded with the odious names of *Calvinists*, *Puritans*, *Fanatics*, and I know not what.

The doctrines of *faith* were not regarded as belonging to the foundation of religion. The *morality* of the Bible was pretended the only thing that was necessary; and as much of the *doctrine*, as all, even Socinians, Quakers, and all the rest were agreed in, were sufficient. And if any opposed this, though in civil language and by fair arguments, they were sure to be exposed as enemies to *morality*; although their adversaries durst not put the contest on this issue with them, that he should be reckoned the greatest friend to morality who was most blameless in his walk, and shewed it the greatest practical regard. They could exercise charity, forbearance, and love to a Socinian that had renounced all the fundamental truths of religion; but none to a poor *Dissenter*, who sincerely believed all the doctrinal articles; nay, even a sober churchman, who could not consent to new unauthorised ceremonies, was become intolerable. So that men, at this time, might, with much more credit and less hazard, turn Socinian, or any thing, than discover the least regard to truths contained in the articles, owned by most of the Reformed churches, and taught by our own Reformers. This is too well known to be denied by any one who knows how things were carried on at that time and since.*

Further, whereas preachers formerly, in order to engage men to a compliance with the gospel, were wont to press much upon them their guilt, the impossibility of standing before God in their own righteousness, their impotency, their misery by the fall, the necessity of regeneration, illumination, the power of grace to make them willing to comply, and that no man could sincerely *call Christ Lord*, and be subject to him practically, *save by the Holy Ghost*; care was now taken to unteach them all this, and to shew them how very little they had lost by the fall, if any thing was lost by it, either in point of *light* to discern, or *power* and *inclination* to practice duty. They were told how great length their *own righteousness* would go, and that it would do their business; they might safely stand before God in it; or if there was any room for *Christ's righteousness*, it was only to piece out their own, where it was wanting. In a word, the people were told, what fine persons many of the Heathens were, who knew nothing of illumination, regeneration, or what the Bible was, and how little odds, if any at all, there was betwixt *grace* and *morality*.

* Any one that would be satisfied in the truth of this, must peruse the sermons and writings published by that party of old and of late, and the histories of those times, particularly *Rushworth's Collect*, the speeches of the long Parliament, and later writings, and they will find documents more than enough. And they may consult also *Honorii Regii's* Comment. *de statu Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ.*

And, whereas a veneration of the Lord's day was a mean to keep people under some concern about religion, and that day was spent by faithful ministers, in pressing upon the consciences of their people, those new contemned gospel truths, to the spoiling of the whole plot; care was taken to discredit and bring it into contempt. Ministers, instead of telling them on that day, that they were too much inclined to sin, levity, folly, and vanity, were commanded to deal with them as persons too much inclined to be serious; and instead of preaching the gospel, they were required, under the highest pains, to entertain them with a profane *Book of Sports*. And for disobedience many were rejected. And that they might be taught by example as well as precept, a *Sunday's evening mask* was publicly acted, where were present persons of no mean note.*

Moreover, a state game being now to be played, the pulpit, press, religion and all were made basely to truckle to *state designs*, and to the enslaving of the nations, by advancing the doctrines of *passive obedience, non-resistance*, and *jure-divino-ship* of kings;† whereby men of religion were wounded to see the ordinances of Christ prostituted to such projects, as were entirely foreign, to say no worse, to the design of their institution: And men of no religion, or who were not fixed about it, were drawn over to think it a mere cheat, and that the design of it was only to carry on secular interest under specious pretences.

At length by those means, and some other things, which are not of our present consideration, concurring, confusions ripened into a civil war, whereby every one was left to speak, write, and live as he pleased.

Many who intended no hurt, while they upon honest designs inquired into, and laid open the faults of the topping clergy, did unawares furnish loose and atheistical men with pretences against the ministry. And what in truth gave only ground for a dislike of the persons faulty, was received by many as a just ground of prejudice against the very *pastoral* as *priest-craft*, and all who are clothed with it, as a set of self-designing men.

The body of the people, who had been debauched by the example of a *scandalous clergy*, and hardened in sin by the intermission of all *discipline*, (which of late had only been exercised against the sober and pious who could not go into the measures that were then taken,) the neglect of painful preaching, the *book of sports and pastimes*, and who had their heads filled with airy and self-elating notions of man's *ability to good, free will, universal grace*, and the like, and who now, when they much needed the inspection of their faithful pastors, were deprived of it, many of them, by the iniquity

* Rushworth's Collect. Part 2, Vol. 1, page 459.
† Bishop of Sarum on the Articles, Art. 7, page 152.

of the times, being forced to take sanctuary in foreign nations; the people, I say, by these things turned quite giddy, and broke into numberless sects and parties. Every one who had entertained those giddy notions was zealous, even to madness, for propagating them, and thought himself authorised to plead for them, print for them, and preach them. The office of the ministry, that had before been rendered contemptible by the suppression of the best preachers, and the scandalous lives of those who were mainly encouraged, was now made more so, by the intrusion of every bold, ignorant and assuming enthusiast. The land was filled with books of controversy, stuffed with unsound, offensive and scandalous tenets, which were so multiplied, as they never have been in any nation of the world, in so small a compass of time. The generality of the people being, by the neglect of a scandalous ministry, and the discouragement of those who were laborious, drenched in ignorance, were easily shaken by those controversial writings that were disseminated every where, and became an easy prey to every bold sectarian.

Many of the better sort set themselves to oppose these extremes, and from a detestation of them were carried, some into one evil, some into another; whereby the common enemy reaped advantage, and *truth* suffered even by its defenders. Ministers who desired to be faithful, by the abounding of those errors, were forced to oppose them in public; whereby preaching became less edifying, and disputes increased, to the great detriment of religion.

The nation was thus crumbled into parties, in matters both civil and religious, the times turned cloudy and dark. Pretences of religion were dreadfully abused on all hands to subserve other designs. And even the best both of ministers and people wanted not their own sad failings, which evil men made the worst use of. The *word* and *providence* were used in favour of so many cross opinions and practices, that not a few began to run into that same extreme, which some in France and Italy had before gone into. And about this time it was that the learned *Herbert* began to write in favour of Deism: Of which we shall have occasion to speak afterwards.

After the restoration, things were so far from being mended, that they grew worse. Lewdness and Atheism were encouraged at the court, which now looked like a little Sodom. The clergy turned no less scandalous, if not more so than before. Impiety was, as it were, publicly and with applause acted and taught on the stage, and all serious religion was there exposed and ridiculed. Yea, the pulpits of many became theatres, whereupon men assumed the boldness to ridicule serious Godliness, and the gravest matters of religion; such as communion with God, confession of sin, prayer by the Spirit, and the whole work of conversion. Controversial writings were multiplied, and in them grave and serious truths were handled in a

jocular way. The scriptuses were burlesqued; and the most important truths, (under pretence of exposing the Dissenters, to the great grief of all good men among them, and in the church of England,) were treated with contempt and scorn. The pulpits were again prostituted to *state designs* and *doctrines;* and the great truths of the gospel, in reference to *man's misery*, and his *recovery by Jesus Christ*, were entirely neglected by many; and discourses of *morality* came in their place, I mean a morality that has no respect to Christ as its *end, author, and the ground of its acceptance with God* which is plain *heathenism*. The soberer, and the better part were traduced as enthusiastical, disloyal hypocrites, and I know not what. And sometimes they on the other hand, in their own defence, were constrained to lay open the impiety, atheism, and blasphemous boldnes of their traducers in their way of management of divine things. And while matters were thus carried betwixt them, careless and indifferent men, especially of the better and most considerable quality, being debauched in their practice, by the licentiousness of the court, the immorality and looseness of the stage, were willing to conform their principles to their practice; for which this state of things gave them a favourable occasion and plausible pretences. Men whose walk and way looked like any thing of a real regard to religion, they heard so often traduced as hypocrites, fanatics, and I know not what, that they were easily induced to believe them to be such. They who taught them so, on the other hand, by the liberty they assumed in practice, convinced these gentlemen, that whatever their profession was, yet they believed nothing about religion themselves; and therefore it was easy to infer that all was but a cheat. Besides, the Popish party, who were sufficiently encouraged, while the sober Dissenters of the Protestant persuasion were cruelly persecuted, made it their business to promote this unsettledness in matters of religion. They found themselves unable to stand their ground in way of fair debate, and therefore they craftily set themselves rather to shake others in their faith, than directly to press them to a compliance with their own sentiments. And it is well known they wrote many books full of sophistry, plainly levelling at this, to bring men to believe *nothing;* as well knowing, that if they were once brought there, they would soon be brought to believe *any thing* in matters of religion.

On these and the like occasions and pretences, arose this defection from the gospel, which has been nourishsd by many of the same things which first gave it birth, till it is grown to such strength, as fills all well-wishers to the interest of religion with just fears as to the issue.

Nor was it any wonder that these pretences should take, (especially with persons of liberal education and parts, who only were capable of observing those faults which gave occasion for them,) since the

generality were prepared for, and inclined to such a *defection*, by a long continuance under the external dispensation of the gospel, without any experience of its power, the prevalent love of lust, that makes men impatient of any thing that may have the least tendency to restrain them from pursuing the gratification thereof; to which we may add the natural enmity of the mind of man against the mystery of the gospel.

There was another thing which at this time had no small influence—the philosophical writings of Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza, and some others of the same kidney, got, one way or other, a great vogue amongst our young gentry and students, whereby many were poisoned with principles destructive of all true religion and morality.

By those and the like means, things are now come to that pass, that not a few have been bold to avow their apostacy from the christian religion, not only in conversation, but in print. They disown the name of Christ, call themselves *Deists*, and glory in that name. They have published many writings reflecting on the scriptures, and justifying themselves in rejecting them.

And we have just reason to suspect, that, besides those who do avow their principles, who are perhaps as numerous in these lands as any where else, there are many, who yet are ashamed to speak it out, who bear them good-will, and who want only a little time more to harden themselves against the *odium* that this way goes under, and a fair occasion of throwing off the mask, which they yet think meet to retain. Of this we have many indications.

Many have assumed an unaccountable boldness in treating things sacred and serious too freely in writing and conversation. They make bold to jest upon the scriptures, and upon every occasion to traverse them. When once men have gone this length, the veneration due to that blessed book is gone, and they are in a fair way to reject it.

Others have made great advances to this defection, by disseminating and entertaining reproaches against a standing ministry. It is known what contempt has been cast upon this order of men, whom God hath entrusted with the gospel dispensation, and who, by office, are obliged to maintain its honor. If this order of men fall under that general contempt, which some do their utmost to bring them to, religion cannot long maintain its station among us. When the principal means of the Lord's appointment are laid aside, or rendered useless, no other means will avail.

And hereon, further, there follows a neglect of attendance on the ministry of the word, which the Lord has appointed for the edification of the church, and establishing people in the faith of the truth he has revealed to us therein. When this once begins to be neglected, men will soon turn sceptical and unconcerned about religion.

And further, it is very observable, that many are strengthened in this neglect, by principles calculated for this purpose; while the whole efficacy of preaching is made to depend, not on the *blessing* of Christ, whose institution it is, or the *influences* of his spirit, which he has promised for setting it home on the hearers for their conviction, conversion and edification—but on the *abilities* and *address* of the preachers. It is natural to conclude, that it is better to stay at home and read some book, than to go to hear a sermon, if the preacher is not of very uncommon abilities: Which is a principle avowed by many, and their practice suits their principles.

Besides, which is the true spring of the former, I am afraid *ignorance* of the nature of *revealed religion*, the design of its institutions, and all its principal concerns, is become more common than is usually observed, even amongst men of liberal education and the best quality. And hence many of them entertain notions inconsistent with their own religion, at first out of ignorance, and afterwards think themselves in honor engaged to defend them, although destructive to the religion they profess.

Add to all this, that profanity in practice has, like a deluge, overspread the lands. And where this once takes place, love to sin never fails to engage men to those principles, which may countenance them in the courses they love, and design to cleave to.

This seems plainly to be the state of matters with us at present. And we see but little appearance of any redress. The infection spreads, and many are daily carried off by it, both in England and Scotland. Though it must be owned that Scotland, as yet, is less tainted with that poison: but those of this nation have no reason to be secure, since many are infected, and more are in a forwardness to it than is commonly thought.

Having given this short, but I conceive, true account of the *rise* and *growth* of *Deism*, it now remains that we consider, what these principles are which they maintain. The Deists, although they are not perfectly *one* among themselves, yet do agree in two things:— 1. They all reject *revealed religion*, and plainly maintain that all pretences to *revelation* are vain, cheat and imposture. 2. They all maintain that *natural religion* is sufficient to answer all the great ends of religion, and the only rule whereby all our religious practices are to be squared. The *first* of these assertions only tells what their religion *is not*, and expresses their opposition to all revelation, particularly to Christianity; which has been worthily defended and asserted against all their objections by many of late, and I shall not much insist in adding to what they have written to such excellent purpose. The *second* tells us what their religion *is*; and it is this we chiefly design in the following papers to debate with them.— They have long been upon the *offensive* part, which is more easy; we design now to put them upon the *defensive*.

They who call themselves *Deists*, although they thus far agree, yet are not all of one sort. I find them by one of their own number, classed into two sorts, *mortal* and *immortal*.*

The *immortal* are they who maintain a *future state*. The *mortal*, they who *deny one*. It is with the *first* we are principally concerned; yet I shall in the subsequent chapter offer a few things with respect to the *mortal deists*. And in what I have to say of them I shall be very short; because I conceive, what has already been offered in the introduction, against this sort of men, might almost supersede any further discourse about them.

CHAP. II.

Mortal Deists who, and what Judgment to be made of them and their sentiments.

THE *mortal Deists*, who also are called *nominal Deists*, denying a *future state*, are, in effect, *mere Atheists*. This perhaps some may think a harsh judgment; but yet it is such as the Deists themselves, who are on the other side, will allow.

One who owns himself a Deist, thus expresses his mind—"We "do believe, that there is an infinitely powerful, wise and good "God, who superintends the actions of mankind, in order to retri- "bute to every one according to their deserts: Neither are we to "boggle at this creed; for if we do not stick to it, we ruin the foun- "dation of all human happiness, and are in effect no better than "mere Atheists."†

A further account of this sort of men we have given us by one, whom any may judge capable enough for it, who considers his way of writing, and the account he gives of himself. "I have observed "some," says he, "who pretend themselves Deists, that they are "men of loose and sensual lives; and I make no wonder that they "dislike the christian doctrine of self-denial, and the severe threat- "enings against wilful sinners. You may be sure they will not al- "ledge this reason: But having read Spinoza and Hobbs, and be- "ing taught to laugh at the story of Balaam's ass, and Sampson's "locks, they proceed to ridicule the reality of all miracles and reve- "lation. I have conversed with several of this temper, but could "never get any of them serious enough to debate the reality of re- "ligion—but a witty jest, and t'other glass, puts an end to all fur-

* Oracles of Reason, page 99.
† Letter to the Deists, page 125.

"ther consideration."* These are mere sceptics and practical Atheists, rather than real Deists.

Now, it is to no purpose to debate with men of this temper. If they will listen to arguments, many have said enough, if not to convince them, (for I know it is not an easy matter to convince some men,) yet to stop their mouths; and therefore I shall not offer any arguments—only I shall lay down a few clear *principles*, and from them draw an *inference* or two, which will make it evident, what judgment we are to make of this sort of men.

The *principles* I take for incontrovertible are these which follow: 1. He deserves not the name of a *man* who acts not *rationally*; knowing what he does, and to what end. 2. No action which contributes not, at least in appearance, to *man's happiness* is worthy of him. 3. The happiness of a present life, which is all that these gentlemen allow, consists in the enjoyments of things agreeable to *our nature*, and freedom from those that are noisome to it. 4. Man's nature is such, that *his felicity* depends not only on these things, which at present he has, or wants; but likewise on what is past, and what is future. A prospect of the one, and a reflection on the other, according as they are more or less agreeable, exceedingly increases his pleasure or pain. 5. The hopes of obtaining hereafter *the good* we at present want, and of being freed from *evils* we suffer by, mightily enhances the pleasure of what we possess, and allays the trouble that arises from incumbent evils. 6. So strong is the desire every one finds in himself of a continuation in being, as cannot choose but render the thoughts of *annihilation* very terrible and irksome. 7. The practice of *virtue* as it is the most probable means of attaining *future happiness*, if any such state be, so it is that which tends most to perfect and advance man's nature; and so must give the most solid and durable pleasure, even here in this life. 8. It is malicious to do what tends to the obstructing *another's happiness*, when it cannot further *one's own*. Few men will question any of these, and if any do, it is not worth while to debate with him. Now from these we may see,

1. It would contribute much to those gentlemen's *present felicity* to believe, (be it true or false) that there is a *future state of happiness*, since the hopes of immutable and endless bliss would be a notable antidote against the uneasiness of mind that arises, not only from incumbent evils, but also from those we fear, and the inconstancy of our short-lived enjoyments.

2. The generality of mankind, especially where christianity obtains, being already possessed of the prospect of *future happiness*, which supports them under present evils, arms them against the troublesome reflections on past troubles, and fears of the future;

* Growth of Deism, page 5.

and moreover animates them in the practice of these actions whereby not only their own good, but that of the societies wherein they live, is signally promoted; all attempts to rob them of this hope are highly malicious, and import no less than a conspiracy against the happiness of mankind, and the good of the society wherein they live: And therefore we may say assuredly, that as those *mortal Deists* are much incommoded by their own opinion; so their attempts for its propagation, must be looked on as proceeding from no good design to the rest of mankind.

Here perhaps some of them may say, that this opinion tends to liberate a great part of mankind from the disquieting fears of *future misery*.

To this I answer, 1. I believe it true, that their fears of *future misery* are uneasy to them; or they have but little hope of *future felicity*. Their way of living allows them none. But these fears proceed from consciousness of guilt, and are the genuine result of actions, equally destructive to the actors, and the interest of the rest of mankind. 2. These fears have their use, and serve to deter from such evils as are ruining to the persons who commit them, and to human society. 3. While this opinion liberates a few of the worst of men, from these fears, which are a part of the just punishment of their villainies, and emboldens them to run on in those evils which ruin themselves and others, it dispirits and discourages the only useful part of mankind, by filling them with dismal thoughts of *annihilation*. 4. Nor can all that the Deists are able to do, liberate themselves or mankind from those fears. The utmost that they can pretend, with any shew of reason, is, that we have not ground to believe such a state. Will this make us sure that there is none? But of this we have said enough in the introduction.

By what has been said it is evident, what judgment we are to make of this sort of Deists. Their lives, writings and death, shew them to be mere Atheists.

Vaninus, when first he appeared and wrote his *Amphitheatrum Providentiæ Divinæ*, set out for such an one that *believed a God*. But at length spoke out plainly that *he believed none*, and was deservedly burnt for *Atheism* at Thoulouse, April 9, 1619. He confessed there were twelve of them that parted in company from Naples to teach their doctrine in all the provinces of Europe.*

Uriel Accosta wrote for this opinion, as himself tells us in his *Examplar Vitæ Humanæ*, which is subjoined to *Limburg's* conference with *Orobius* the Jew.† His last action tells us what man he was. After he had made a vain attempt to shoot his brother, he discharged a pistol into his own breast. This fell out about the

* See Great Geographical Dictionary.
† Limburgi Præfatio and Respons. Urileus Accostæ Libro.

twentieth or thirtieth year of the last century. *So they live, and so they die.*

Were this our design, or if we saw any need of it, we might give such an account of the principles, practices, and tragical exits of not a few of this sort of persons, as would be sufficient to deter the sober from following them. But what has been said is sufficient to discover the destructive tendency of their *prime opinion.* And further we shall not concern ourselves with them, but go on to that which is mainly intended in this discourse.

CHAP. III.

Wherein the controversy betwixt us and the Immortal Deists is stated and cleared.

THE *immortal Deists* who own a *future state,* are the only persons with whom it is worth while to dispute this point about the *sufficiency of natural religion.* Before we offer any arguments on this head, it is necessary we state the question clearly; and it is the more necessary, that none of the Deists have had the courage or honesty to do it. And here in the entry we shall lay down some things, which we think are not to be controverted on this occasion. And we shall, after these concessions are made, inquire what still remains in debate.

1. We look on it as certain, that all the world, in all ages, hath been possessed of some notion of a GOD, of some *power* above them, on whom, in more or less, they did depend; and to whom on this account some respect is due. This Heathens have observed. *Cicero,* amongst others, hath long since told us, "That "there is no nation so barbarous that owns not some God, that has "not some anticipations or impressions from nature, of a God."* Nor is this any more, than what we are told, Rom. i. 19, 20, &c. that the Gentiles have some notions of *truth* concerning God, which they *hold in unrighteousness;* that God, partly by erecting a tribunal in their own breasts, which they cannot decline, though they never so much would, and partly by presenting to their eyes those visible works that bear a lively impress of his *invisible power* and *Godhead,* hath, as it were, forced upon them *the knowledge* of some part of that, which the apostle calls γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, or *that which may be known of God.* Whence they all in some measure *knew God,* though *they glorified him not as God.*

* Cicero de Natura Deorum, Lib. 1.

" possibly be any government settled amongst Atheists, or those " who pay no respect to a Deity. Remove God once out of Hea- " ven, and there will never be any gods upon earth. If man's na- " ture had not something of subjection in it to a Supreme Being " above him, and inherent principles obliging him how to behave " himself toward God, and toward the rest of the world, govern- " ment could have never been introduced, nor thought of. Nor " can there be the least mutual security between governors and " governed, where no God is admitted. For it is an acknowledging " of GOD, in his supreme judgment over the world, that is the " ground of an oath; and upon which the validity of all human en- " gagements do depend," says an excellent person.* And the famed Cicero expresses himself very fully to the same purpose. Speaking of religion and piety, he says—*Quibus sublatis, perturbatio vitae sequitur, & magna confusio, atque haud scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublata, fides etiam, & societas humani generis, & una excellentissima virtus, justitia tollatur.*† If the question concerned this end, we might own natural religion some way sufficient to be a foundation for human society, and some order and government in the world: For it is in fact evident, that where revelation has been wanting, there have been several well-formed governments. Though still it must be said, that they were obliged to *tradition* for many things that were of use, and to have recourse to *pretended revelation*, where the *real* was wanting.‡ Which shews revelation necessary, if not to the *being*, yet to the *well-being* of society.

2. Natural religion may be considered in its subserviency to God's *moral government* of the world; and with respect to this, it has several considerable uses, that I cannot enter upon the detail of. It is the measure of God's judicial proceedings, with respect to those of mankind who want revelation; and as to this, there is one thing that is usually observed, *that it is sufficient to justify God in punishing sinners.* That God sometimes, even here in time, punishes offenders, and, by the forebodings of their consciences, gives them dreadful presages of a progress in his severity against them, after this life, cannot well be denied. Now certainly there must be some *measure*, whereby God proceeds in this matter. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression.* Punishments cannot be inflicted, but for the transgression, and according to the tenor of a *law.* And this law, if it is *holy, just*, and *good* in its *precepts*, and *equal*

* See Ch. Wolseley's Unreas. of Atheism, page 152, &c.

† De Natura Deorum, Lib. 1. mihi. page 5.—" Which being taken away, a " great disorder and confusion in life must follow; and I know not whether, " after piety to the God's is taken away, truth and the social affections, and " justice, the most excellent of the virtues, would not at the same time be " taken away."

‡ See Amyrald on Relig. Part 2. Cap. 8.

in its sanction, is not only the *measure* whereby the governor proceeds in punishing offenders; but that which justifies him in the punishment of them. It is needless to speak of the grant of *rewards* in this case; because with respect to them, not only *justice* but *grace* and *bounty* have place, which are not restricted to any such nice measures, in the dispensation of favours, as *justice* is in the execution of punishments. Now, if natural religion is considered with respect to this end, we say it is *sufficient* to justify God, and fully clear him from any imputation of injustice or cruelty, whatever punishments he may, either in time or after time, inflict upon mankind who want revelation. There are none of them come to age, who—1. Have not fallen short of knowing many duties, which they might have known. 2. Who have not omitted many duties, which they knew themselves obliged to. And 3. Who have not done what they knew they ought not to have done, and might have forborn. If these three are made out, as no doubt they may be against all men, I do not see what reason any will have to implead God either of hardship or injustice.

There are I know, who think it very hard, that those natural notices of God and religion should be *sufficient* to justify God in adjudging those, who counteract them, to *future* and *eternal punishments*, while yet such an attendance to, and compliance with them as men are capable of, in their present circumstances, is not *sufficient* to entitle us to *eternal rewards*.

But if, in this matter, any injustice is charged upon God, who shall manage the plea? Shall they who transgress and contravene those notices do it? But what injustice meet they with, if they are condemned for not knowing what they might have known? not doing what they were obliged to do, and were able to do? and for doing what they might and should have forborn? If all these may be laid to their charge, though there were no more, what have they to say for themselves, or against God? They surely have no reason to complain. If any have reason to complain, it must be they who have walked up to the natural notices of God. But where is there any such? We may spare our vindication till such an one be found. Nor is it easy to prove that man's obedience though perfect, must necessarily entitle to eternal felicity. And he who shall undertake to implead God of injustice upon the account of such a sentence, as that we now speak of, will not find it easy to make good his charge.

Were the difficulty thus moulded, that it is hard to pretend that those natural notices of God are sufficient to justify God in condemning the transgressors of them to future punishments, while punctual compliance with them is not sufficient to save those, who yield this obedience, from those punishments, which the contraveners are liable to for their transgression—though it were thus moulded, it would be a hard task to make good such a charge. But

I am not concerned in it; nor are any, who judge the persons, who have gone farthest in this compliance, liable upon other accounts; because they still own their compliance so far available to them, as to save them from those degrees of wrath, which deeper guilt would have inferred.

3. Other ends there are, with respect to which natural religion may be considered, which I shall pass without naming, and shall only make mention of that which we are concerned in, and is aimed at in the present controversy, and that is, the *future happiness of man in the enjoyment of God.* This certainly is the *supreme* and *ultimate end of religion* with respect to *man himself.* For that the *glory of God* is the *chief end absolutely*, and must, in all respect, have the preference, I place beyond debate.

Now it is as to this end, that the question about the sufficiency of natural religion is principally moved. And the question, in short, amounts to this, whether the notices of God and religion, which all men by the light of nature have, or at least by the mere improvement of their natural abilities without revelation, may have, are sufficient to direct them in the way to eternal blessedness, satisfy them that such a state is attainable, and point out the way how it is to be attained; and whether by that practical compliance with those notices, which man in his present state is capable of, he may certainly attain to acceptance with God, please him, and obtain this eternal happiness in the enjoyment of him? The Deists are for the affirmative, as we shall afterwards make appear, when we consider their opinions more particularly.

But before we proceed to offer arguments, it will be needful to branch this question into several particulars that are included in it, that we may the better conceive of, and take up the import of it, and how much is included and wrapt up in this assertion. The question which we have proposed in general, may be turned into these five subordinate queries:

1. Whether, by the mere light of nature, we can discover an eternal state of happiness, and know that this is attainable? Unless this is done, nothing in matters of religion is done. It is impossible that nature's light can give any directions as to the means of attaining future happiness, if it cannot satisfy us that there is such a state.

2. Whether men, left to the conduct of the mere light of nature, can certainly discover and find out the way of attaining it? that is, whether, by the light of nature, we can know and find out all that is required of us, in the way of duty, in order to our eternal felicity? If the affirmative is chosen, it must be made appear by nature's light, what duties are absolutely necessary to this purpose; that those which are prescribed are indeed duties; and that they are all that are necessary in order to the attainment of the end, if they are

complied withal. Although we should have it never so clearly made out, that there is a future state of happiness, yet if we are left at an utter loss as to the means of attaining it, we are no better for the discovery.

3. Whether nature's light gives such a full and certain discovery of both these as the case seems to require? Considering what a case man at present is in, to hope for an eternity of happiness, is to look very high: And any man, who in his present circumstances, shall entertain such an expectation, on mere surmises, suspicions and may-bees, may be reproached by the world, and his own heart, as a fool. To keep a man up in the steady impression, and expectation of so great things, conjectures, suppositions, probabilities, and confused general hints, are not sufficient. Again, there are huge difficulties to be surmounted in the way to this blessedness, which are obvious and certain. Sensible losses are sometimes to be sustained, sensible pains to be undergone, and sensible dangers to be looked in the face. Now the question is, whether is there such a clear and certain knowledge of these attainable, as the importance of the case, the stress that is to be laid on them, requires? Certain it is, it will not be such notices as most please themselves with, that will be able to answer this end.

4. Whether the evidence of the attainableness of a future state of happiness, and of the way to it, is such as suits the capacities of all concerned? Every man has a concernment in this matter. The Deists inquire after a religion that is able to save all, whereof every man, if he but please, may have the eternal advantage. Now then the question is, whether the case is so stated, as that every man, who is in earnest, if he has but the use of reason, however shallow his capacity is, how great soever his inevitable entanglements and hinderances from close application are, may attain to this certainty about this end, and the way to it? For it must be allowed that there is a vast difference among men as to capacity. Men are no more of one measure in point of the reach of one, which another may easily attain to. Now, may as much be certainly known by the meanest capacity as is necessary for him to know? Again, all men have not alike leisure. That may be impossible to me, if I am a poor man, obliged to work hard to earn my own and family's bread, which would not be so if I had leisure and opportunity to follow my studies. Now, if these discoveries, both as to their truth, certainty and suitableness, are not such as the meanest, notwithstanding any inevitable hinderances he may be under, may reach, they will not answer the end.

5. Whether, supposing all the former, every man, however surrounded with temptations, and inveigled with corrupt inclinations, or other hinderances, which he cannot evite, is yet able, without any supply of supernatural strength, to comply so far with all those

duties, as is absolutely needful in order to obtain this eternal happiness? Whatever our knowledge is, we are not the better for it, unless we are able to yield a practical compliance.

The Deists have the affirmative of all these questions to make good. How they acquit themselves in this, we shall see afterwards. The task, as any one may see, is sufficiently difficult. And I do not know, that any one of them who has yet wrote, hath given any evidence that they understood the state of the question in its full extent. They huddle it up in the dark, that the weakness of their proof may not appear. And perhaps they are not willing to apply their thoughts so closely to the subject, as is requisite, in order to take up the true state of the controversy.

The more remiss and careless they have been this way, we had so much the more to do to state the question truly betwixt us and them. And having done this, we shall next proceed to make good our part of it.

A *negative* is not easily proven, which puts us at some loss. It has been denied that it can in some cases be proven. But we hope, in this case, we are able to offer such reasons as will justify us in holding the *negative* in this debate. And we shall see next whether they are able to demonstrate the *affirmative*, and offer as good reasons for it, as we shall give against it. And it is but reasonable they should offer better, in a matter of so great concern.

CHAP. IV.

Proving the insufficiency of Natural Religion, from the insufficiency of its discoveries of a Deity.

THOUGH it belongs to the asserters of the *sufficiency of natural religion*, to justify by argument their assertion, and we are upon the *negative*, might supersede any further debate until such time, as we see how they can acquit themselves here; yet truth, not triumph, being the design of our engaging in the contest, that none may think we are without reason in our denial, and that we put them upon the proof, only to difficult them, we shall now by some arguments endeavor to evince the *insufficiency* of *natural religion*.

The first argument I shall improve to this purpose is deduced from the *insufficiency* of those *discoveries*, which the *light of nature* is able to make of God. Nothing is more plain than this, that religion is founded upon the *knowledge* of the *Deity;* and that our regard for him will be answerable to the knowledge we have of him.

That religion, therefore, which is defective here, is lame with a witness: And if nature's light cannot afford such notices of the De-

ity, as are sufficient or necessary to beget and maintain religion amongst men, then it can never with any rational man be allowed sufficient to direct men in religion.

Now, for clearing this argument, several things are to be discussed. And first of all, it is requisite, that we state such a notion of religion in general, as may be allowed to pass with all, who are, or can reasonably be supposed competent judges in such matters. Religion then, in general, may be justly said to import *that veneration, respect or regard, which is due from the rational creature in his whole course or life, to the supreme super-eminently excellent Being, his Creator, Preserver, Lord or Governor and Benefactor.*

The *actions* of the rational creature, which may come under the notion of religion, are of two sorts: some of them do directly, properly and immediately import a regard or respect to GOD as their *end;* which they are immediately and properly designed to express. Such acts are called *acts of worship.* And religion is more eminently thought to consist in these, and that not without reason. Yea, by some it is wholly, and against all reason, confined to them, and circumscribed within those bounds. Again, there are other actions, which, though they have other more proper, direct and immediate ends, on account whereof they undergo various denominations, yet they also are, or may be, and certainly should be subordinate to that, which, though it is not the proper, most immediate, and distinguishing end of these actions, yet is the common and ultimate end, at which all a man's actions should be levelled. Now all the actions of a rational creature, which are of this last sort, as referred to a Deity, and importing somewhat of religion, may be termed acts of *moral obedience.* In so far they are religious, and come within the compass of our consideration, as they express any respect to God. And they express and import regard to God, in as far as they can quadrate with the moral law, which is the instrument of God's moral government of the world; and therefore if they are right and agreeable to this rule, they may be termed acts of moral obedience, to distinguish them from these acts, which are solely and more strictly religious, and are called acts of worship.

But to speak somewhat more particularly of this regard that is due to God, it is as evident as any thing can, that it must be,

1. In its *formal nature* different from that respect, which we may allowably pay to any creature; that is, it must be given on accounts no way common to him with any of the creatures, but on account of those distinguishing excellencies, which are his incommunicable glory. None can reasonably deny this, since it must be allowed by all, that *religious respect* due to God, and *civil respect* due to creatures are different, and must be principally differenced by

the grounds whereon the respect to the one or other is paid. Now the grounds whereon this homage is due unto the Deity, are the supereminent, nay, infinite excellency of his nature and perfections, and his indisputably supreme, absolute and independent sovereignty over all his creatures, which stands eternally firm and unshaken, as being supported by that *super-eminency of his excellency*, his *creation*, *preservation*, and *benefits*. Now, none of these grounds are, in any degree, communicable to the creatures; and so to talk of a religious worship due to the creature, is to speak nonsense with a witness.

2. This veneration we give to God must be *intensively*, or as to degree, not only superior to that which we give to any creature, but even *supreme*. It is not enough, that we love God on accounts peculiar to him; but we must love him with a love superior to that which we give any creature, and *answerable* to those accounts, whereon we do love him. And the like may be said as to other instances. There is no need of insisting in the proof of this. Would our king be pleased, if we paid him no more respect than we do his servant? Is the distance betwixt God and the highest creature less considerable, than that which is betwixt a king and his meanest subject? Nay, is it not infinitely more? How can it then reasonably be expected that the same degree of respect we pay to the creatures, will find acceptance, or answer the duty we owe to the glorious and ever-blessed LORD GOD?

3. This veneration must be *extensively* superior to that paid to any of the creatures. Our regard to the Deity must not be confined to one sort of our actions, (those, for instance, which are religious in a *strict sense*, or more plainly, *acts of worship*;) but it must run through every action of our life, inward and outward. Every action is a dependent of God's, and owes him homage. It is otherwise with men; for to one sort of men, we may owe respect, in one sort of our actions, and owe them none in another. A child, in filial duties, owes his father *respect*; as a subject, he owes his governor *reverence*; and so of other instances of a like nature: But to no one creature is he, in *all respects*, subject, or obliged by every action to express any regard. And the reason is plain; he is subject to none of them in all respects wherein he is capable of acting. But with respect to God, the matter is quite otherwise: whatever he has is from God, and to him he is in *all respects* subject, on him he every way depends. The power your father has over you, he derives from God, and it is God that binds the duties you are to pay your father on you; and therefore God is to be owned as *supreme*, even in every act of duty that you perform to your father, your king, your neighbour, or yourself: for you are in all respects *his*. While you are subordinate on various accounts to others, yet still God is in every regard *supreme* and *sovereign Lord* and *disposer* of

you and your actions, and therefore you owe him a regard in every thing you think, speak or do. I think this plain enough.

I hope this account of the *nature of religion* in general, will not be found liable to any considerable exceptions, it being no other than such as the first view of the nature of the thing offers to any that seriously considers it. And from this account it is evident, that religion is founded on the *knowledge of a Deity*. A *blind devotion* that is begot and maintained, either by profound ignorance of God, or confused notions of him, answers neither man's nature, which is rational, and requires that he proceed in all his actions, especially those of most moment, rationally, that is, with knowledge and willingness; nor will it obtain acceptance, as that which answers his duty, whereby he is obliged to serve God with the best and in the highest way that his faculties admit him. The contrary supposition of Papists is a scandalous reproach to the *nature*, both of God and man; and an engine suited only unto the selfish design of the villainous priests, who, that they may have the conduct of men's souls, and so the management of their estates, have endeavored to hood-wink men, and make him brutish, where he should be most rational; and that they may have the *best*, they make him present God with *the blind* and *the lame*, which his *soul abhors*.

This, being, in general, clear, *that the knowledge of God is the foundation of all acceptable religion*, it is now proper to inquire *what discoveries* of God are requisite to bring man to such a religion, as has been above described, and to keep him up in the practice of it. Now if we look seriously into this matter, I think we may lay down the following position, as clear beyond rational contradiction.

1. That *a particular knowledge of God is requisite to this purpose*, to beget and maintain this reverence for the Deity, which is his undoubted due. It is not enough that we have some general notions, however extensive. To conceive of God in the general, that he is the best and greatest of beings, *optimus maximus*, is not enough. The reason is *obvious*: we must have in every sort of actions, nay, in each particular action, that knowledge which may influence and guide us to that respect, which is due to him, in that sort of actions, or that particular one; but this general notion having no more respect to one than another, will not do. It directs us no more in one than another, unless the particulars that are comprehended under that general be explained to, and understood by the actor.

2. That *knowledge, which will answer the end, must be large and comprehensive*. *This religion* is not to be confined to one particular sort of actions, but to run through all, and therefore there must be a knowledge, not merely of one or two perfections of the divine nature, but of all: not simply, as if God were to be com-

prehended, but of those perfections and prerogatives of God, which require our regard in our particular actions, in so far as they are the ground of our veneration. As for instance, to engage me to *trust* GOD, I must know his *power*, his *care* and *knowledge*: to engage me to *pray* to him, I must be persuaded of his *knowledge*, of his *willingness* and *power* to assist me in the suit I put up; to engage me to pay him *obedience*, I must know his *authority*, the *laws* he has stamped it on, and that he has fixed a law to these particular actions, either more *general* or more *special*. Whence it being evident, that different actions require different views of God in order to their regulation; and all a man's actions being under rule, there must be a large and comprehensive knowledge of God to guide him in his whole course.

3. It being no less than an *universal religion* that is to be sought after, *the discoveries of God* wherein it must be founded, *must be plain to the capacities of all mankind;* and that both as to the *truth* of these discoveries and their *use*. It is certain that all men are no more of the same measure of understanding than they are in stature. However important the discovery is, if it is above my reach, it is all one to me as if it were not discovered at all. To tell me of such a thing, but it is in the clouds, is to amuse and not instruct me. There may indeed, supposing an universal religion, be somewhat of difference as to knowledge allowed, as to some of the concernments of this religion, to persons of more capacity and industry, and who have more time; but if it is calculated for the good of all mankind, the discoveries must be such, as all who are concerned may reach, as to all its essentials; for the meanest have as much concernment in them as the greatest.

4. It is most evident, that *these discoveries* must be *certain*, or come recommended by such evidence as may be *convincing and satisfying to every mind*. Conjectured discoveries, or surmises of these things, built upon airy and subtile speculations, are not firm enough to establish such a persuasion of truth in the soul, as may be able to influence this universal regard, over the belly of the strongest inward bias and outward rubs.

5. *The evidence of these things must be abiding;* such as may be able to keep up the soul in a constant adherence to duty. It is not one day that man is to obey, but always; and therefore these discoveries must lie so open to the mind at all times, as that the soul may by them be constantly kept up in its adherence to duty. If from any external or internal cause, there may arise such obstructions as may for one day keep man from those discoveries, or the advantage of them; he may ruin, nay, must ruin himself by failing in his duty; or at least, if he is not ruined, he is laid open to it.

6. Upon the whole it appears, that to found *natural religion*, or to introduce and maintain among men that regard which is due to the Deity, there is requisite such a *large, comprehensive, certain, plain*, and *abiding discovery*, as may have *sufficient force to influence to a compliance with his duty in all instances.*

Thus far matters seem to be carried on with sufficient evidence. We are now come to that which seems to be the *principal hinge*, whereon the whole controversy about the *sufficiency of natural religion* turns; in so far, at least, as it is to be determined by this argument. Now this is, whether nature's light can indeed afford such discoveries of God, as are evinced to be necessary for the support of religion? If it cannot, then it is found *insufficient*; if it can, then natural religion is thus far acquitted from the charge laid against it. Now, to attempt the decision of this question successfully, it is necessary that we state it right. It is not then the question, whether *in nature* there is *sufficient objective light?* as the schools barbarously speak; that is, whether in the works of creation and providence, which lie open to our view, or are the object of our contemplation, there are such prints of God, which, if they were all fully understood by us, are sufficient to this purpose? for the question is not concerning the works of God without us, but concerning us. The plain question is this, "whether man can, from those works of God alone, without the help of revelation, obtain such a knowledge of God, as is sufficient to the purpose mentioned."

Now the question being concerning *our power*, or rather the *extent of our power*, I know but four ways that can be thought upon to come to a point about it: Either,

1. By *divine revelation* we may be informed what *nature's light* unassisted can do. We would willingly put the matter on this issue: Our adversaries will not; so we must leave it. Or,

2. Some apprehend that the way to decide this, is, to take our measures from the *nature of God*; and to inquire, when God was to make or did frame man, with what *powers* it was proper for him to endue him? or, with what *extent of power*, considering the infinite wisdom, goodness and power of the Creator? This way the Deists would go. But 1. It seems a little presumptuous for us to prescribe, or measure what was fit for God to do, by what appears to us fit to have been done. For when we have soared as high as we can, we must fall down again; for God's counsels are too deep for us, and if we should think this or that fit for God, yet he having a more full view of things, may think quite the contrary; and thus all that we can come to here in this way, is but a weak and presumptuous conjecture. 2. If in fact, what we think fit, or conjecture fit for God to have done, it be evident that God has not done; that he has given no such *power* or *extent of it*, as we judge

necessary, our judgment is not only weakly founded, but plainly false; yea, and impious to boot: For if God has done otherwise, it is certain that the way which we prescribed was not best; nor can we hold by our own apprehension, whatever *shews* it is built on, without an implicit charge of folly against God. 3. Whatever we may pretend the wisdom of God requires to be done for or given to man, if by no divine act there is any evidence that he has so done, though there be no proof of his having done the contrary, yet it weakens the evidence of all we can say, if the thing is such in its nature, as would be known by experience, if existent; because, in that case, the whole stress of our argument leans upon a supposition that we are capable of judging of the wisdom of God, while it is certain, we have not all those circumstances under our view, which may make it really fit to act this way rather than that, or that way rather than this, which on the other hand he certainly has. This way then we cannot decide the case.

3. We may immediately perhaps judge of the *extent of man's ability* in this sort, by *a direct inquiry into the nature of the powers*. But this way is as uncertain as the former; for there is no agreement amongst the most judicious about the *nature of those powers*, without endless controversies. And all that are really judicious own such darkness in this matter, that will not allow them to pretend themselves capable to decide the question this way. It is little we know of the *nature*, or *powers*, or *actings* of spirits: Nor do I believe that ever any person that understands, will pretend to decide the controversy this way. Wherefore,

4. We must, upon the whole, give over the business, or inquire into the extent of our ability by *experience;* and judge what man can do by what he has done. If not one has made sufficient discoveries of God, it is rash to say that any one can by the *mere light of nature* make them: More especially it will appear so, if we consider, that all mankind must be pretended equally capable of these discoveries, which concern their own practice. It is strange to pretend that all are capable of doing that which none has done. Further, these discoveries are not of that sort that may be sufficient to answer their end, if one in one age shall make some steps towards them, and another afterwards improve them: But it is necessary that every one, in every age, and at every period of his life, have exact acquaintance with them, in so far as is needful to regulate his practice in that period of his life. When I am in one station, I must either fail in the respect due to God, and so lay myself open to *justice*, or I must know as much of God, as is requisite to influence a due regard in that station, or that part of my life that now runs; and therefore an universal defect as to those discoveries must inevitably overthrow the *pretended ability* of man to make these discoveries, and consequently the *sufficiency of nature's*

light to beget or maintain religion, which cannot be supported without them.

Now for clearing this matter, it is to be considered, that what we are upon is a *negative*, and it belongs to those who affirm *man able to make such discoveries of God*, to show by whom and where these discoveries have been made, or to produce those *notices of* God that are built on the *mere light of nature*, that are *sufficient* to this purpose. Now, none of them dare pretend this has been done, or, at least, shew who has done it, or make the attempt themselves; and therefore we might take it as confessed, that it is not to be done.

But if it is still pretended, that this has been done, though without telling us by whom, or pointing to these discoveries where we may find them:

I answer, How shall we know this? May we know it by the effects of it in the lives of those who either have had no other light save that of *nature*, as it was with the philosophers of old before Christ, or who own no other save that of *nature*, as the Deists and others who rejected christianity? Truly, if we judge by this rule, we are sure the *negative* will be much confirmed? For it is plain that those notions of a God, which were entertained by the philosophers of old, influenced none of them *to glorify him as God*. The vulgar Heathens were void of any respect to the *true God*; nay, by the whole of their practice betrayed the profoundest ignorance, and most contemptuous disregard of him. The philosophers, not one of them excepted, whatever *notions* they had of a Deity, and whatever length some of them went in *morality, upon other inducements*, yet shewed nothing like to that *peculiar, high and extensive respect to the one true God* which we now inquire after. We may bid a defiance to the Deists, to shew us any thing like it in the practice even of a Socrates, a Plato, a Seneca, or any others of them. Their virtue was plainly built upon another bottom. It has been judiciously observed by one of late, that there was little notice taken of God in their *ethicks*; and I may add, as little regard in their *practice*. Nor are the lives of our Deists, or others since, any better proof of the *sufficiency* of the *natural notices* of God, to beget and support a due veneration for him.

If the Deists decline this trial of the *sufficiency* of those *discoveries of* a God, by their influence upon *practice*, then we must look at them in themselves. And here we must have recourse, either to those who had no acquaintance with the *scripture revelation*; or to those who have given us accounts of God amongst ourselves; who though they own not the scriptures to be from God, yet have had access to them, for the improvement of their own notions about God. The last sort might be cast, as incompetent witnesses in this case, upon very revelant grounds. But we shall

give our enemies all that they can desire, even as to the advantage they may have this way, that they may see our cause is not wanting in *evidence* and *certainty*.

We begin then with those who have been left to the *mere light of nature*, to spell out the letters of God's name, from the works of *creation* and *providence*, without any acquaintance with the more plain scripture account of God. Now what we have to say as to them, we shall comprize in a few observations.

1. As for the attainments of the *vulgar Heathens*, there is no place for judging of them otherwise than by their *practice*. They have consigned nothing to writing, and so we have no other way to guess at their opinions in matters of religion, but either by their practice, or by ascribing to them the principles of those, who in their respective countries, had the disposal of these matters. Whichsoever way we consider the matter, it must be owned that the vulgar Heathens were stupidly ignorant as to the truths of religion. If we make their *practice* the measure of judging, which in this case is necessary, none can hesitate about it. If we make the principles and knowledge of their leaders the standard, whereby we are to judge of their attainments, and make a suitable abatement, because scholars must always be supposed to know less than their masters, I am sure the matter will not be much mended, as the ensuing remarks will in part clear.

2. As to the philosophers, if I had time and opportunity to present in a *body* or *system* all that has been said, not *by* one of them, but by all the best of them put together, it would put any one that reads, to wonder, that they, "who were such giants," as an excellent person speaks, "in all other kinds of literature, should "prove such dwarfs in divinity, that they might go to school to get "a lesson from the most ignorant of christians that know any "thing at all."* Any one that will but give himself the trouble to peruse their opinions about God, as they lie scattered in their writings, or even where they are proposed to more advantage by those who have collected and put them together, will soon be convinced of how low a stature their divinity was, and how justly the apostle Paul said, that by *their wisdom they knew not God*. All their knowledge of God was no more than plain and gross ignorance, of which the best of them were not ignorant, and therefore, Thales, Solon, Socrates, and many others, spoke either nothing of God at all, or that which was next to nothing. And it had been well for others, if they had done so too; what they spoke, not only falling short of a sufficient account, but presenting most abominable

* See Cha. Wolsey's reasonableness of scripture belief.

and misshapen notions about God; of which we have a large account in *Cicero de Natura Deorum.**

3. Besides that endless variety amongst different persons, in their opinions about a Deity, which is no mean evidence of their darkness, even the very same persons, who seem to give the best accounts, are wavering and uncertain, say and unsay, seem positive in one place, and immediately in the very next sentence seem to be uncertain and fluctuating. Thus it is with them all, and thus it usually is with persons who are but groping in the dark, and know not well how to extricate themselves.

4. They who go furthest, have never adventured to give any methodical account. They wanted materials for this; and therefore give but dark hints here and there. *Cicero*, who would make one expect such an account, while he inscribes his book *De Natura Deorum*, yet establishes scarce any thing; but spends his time in refuting the opinion of others, without daring to advance his own.†

5. They who have gone furthest, are too narrow in their accounts, they are manifestly defective in the most material things. They are all reserved about the number of the Gods. It is true the best do own that there is one *Supreme*; but then there is scarce any of them positive that there are no more Gods save one. No not Socrates himself, who is supposed to die a martyr for this truth, durst own this plainly. And while this is undetermined, all religion is left loose and uncertain; and mankind cannot know how to distribute their regard to the several deities. Hence another defect arises, and that is about the *super-eminency* of the *divine excellencies*. Although the Supreme Being may be owned superior in order; yet the inferior Deities being supposed more immediate in their influence, this will substract from the Supreme Deity much of his respect, and bestow it elsewhere. Moreover, about God's *creating power* their accounts are very uncertain, few of them owning it plainly. Nor are any of them plain enough about the *special providence* of God, without which it is impossible to support religion in the world.

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* Cicero, Lib. 1. P. 4. *Qui vero Deos esse dixerunt, tanta sunt in varietate ac dissentione constituti, ut eorum molestum sit annumerare sententias. Nam de figuris Deorum & de locis atque sedibus & actione vitæ, multa dicuntur; &c.*— "But those who have affirmed that there are Gods, have gone into so great a "variety and difference of opinion, that it is difficult to enumerate their sen- "timents, for many things are said by them concerning the shapes of the "Gods, their places, habitations, and manner of life."

† De Natura Deorum, Lib. 2. *An, inquit, oblitus es quod initio dixerim, facilius me talibus de rebus, quod non sentirem quam quod sentirem dicere posse.*—"Have "you forgot that I told you at the beginning, that I could more easily tell "what I did not think, than what I thought, of these matters?"

6. As their accounts are too narrow, so in what they do own they are too general. But will this maintain religion? No, by no means. But there must be a particular discovery of these things. Well, do they afford this? Nay, so far are they from explaining themselves to any purpose here, that industriously they keep in dark generals. The *divine excellencies*, unless it be a few negative ones, they do seldom attempt any explication of. His *providence* they dare not attempt any particular account of. The extent of it to all particular actions is denied by many of their schools, owned distinctly by few, if any; but particularly cleared up by none of them.* The *laws* whereby he rules men are no where declared. When some of them are insisted on in their *ethicks*, the authority of God in them, which is the only supreme ground of obedience, and that which alone can lay any foundation for our acceptance in that obedience at God's hand, is no where taken notice of. The holiness of the divine nature, which is the great restraint from sin, is little noticed, except where some of the more abominable evils are spoke of. The *goodness* of God as a *rewarder*, is not by any of them cleared up. And yet upon these things the whole of religion hangs, which by them are either wholly passed over, or mentioned in generals, or darkened by explications that give no light to the generals; at least, and for most part, are so far from explaining, that they obscure, nay corrupt them, by blending pernicious falsehoods with the most valuable truths.

7. The discoveries they offer are not for the most part proven, but merely asserted. Their notions are most of them learned from tradition, and they were, it would seem, at a loss about arguments to support them. Where the greatest certainty is required, least is found.

8. Where they do produce arguments, as they do sometimes, for the being and providence of God in general, they are too dark and nice, both in matter and manner, to be of any use to the generality of mankind.

To have produced particular instances for the justification of each of these observations, would have been too tedious. Any one that would desire to be satisfied about them, may be fully furnished with instances, if he will give himself the trouble to peruse *Cicero de Natura Deorum, Diogenes Laertius's Lives of the Philosophers, or Stanley's Lives;* but especially the writings of the several philosophers themselves concerning this subject. Nor will this task be very tedious, if he is but directed to the places where they

* ——*Doctrinam de providentia rerum particularisive gratia a veteribus (quatenus ex eorum libris qui extant, collegi potest) remissius credi observamus:* Herbert de Veritate, page 271, 272.—"We observe that the doctrine of uni-"versal providence and particular grace was but faintly believed by the an-"cients, so far as can be collected from their books."

treat of God: For they insist not long on this subject, and the better and wiser sort of them are most sparing.

When I review these observations, which occurred by my reading the works of the Heathens, and their opinions concerning God, I could not but admire the gross inadvertency, to give it no worse word, of the Deists, (and more especially of the late lord Herbert, who was a man of learning and application) who pretend that the knowledge of those general attributes of God, his greatness and goodness, vulgarly expressed by *Optimus Maximus*, are sufficient: Since it is plain from what has been said, 1. That *this general* knowledge is of no significancy to influence such a peculiar, high and extensive, practical regard to the Deity, as the notion of religion necessarily imports. Of which even Blount was, it seems, aware, when he confesses in his *Religio Laici*, that there is a necessity that his articles must be well explained. 2. It is plain that the philosophers, and consequently the common people, did not understand *well* the meaning of those articles, or of those general notions concerning God, at least, in any degree answerable to the *end* we now have in view.

I dare submit these observations, as to their truth, to any impartial person, who will be at pains to try them, upon the granting of a twofold reasonable demand. 1. That he will consult either the authors themselves, or those, who cannot be suspected of any bias, by their being Christians, which I hope Deists will think just; such as Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, &c. or those who have made large collections, not merely of their *general sentences* concerning God; but of their explications. In which sort Stanley excels. 2. I require that, in reading the authors, that they do not lay hold on a *general assertion*, and so run away, without considering the whole of what the authors speak, on that head. The reasons why I make these demands, are, first, some persons designing, for one end or other, to illustrate points in Christianity with quotations from Heathen authors, take up *general expressions*, which seem congruous with, or may be the same, which the scripture uses, without considering how far they differ, when they both descend to a particular explication of those general words. Again, some Christians, writing the lives of philosophers, and collecting their opinions, are misled by favour to some particular persons, of whom they have conceived a *vast idea*, and therefore either suppress or wrest what may detract from the person they design to magnify. M. Dacier, for instance, has written the life of Plato: but that account is the issue of a peculiar favour for that philosopher's notions in general; and it is evidently the aim of the writer to reconcile his sentiments to the *Christian religion*. A work that some others have attempted before. To this purpose Plato's words are wrested, and such constructions put on them, as can no other way be justified, but by sup-

posing that no material points of the Christian religion could be hid from Plato, or his master Socrates. And yet after all, Plato's gross mistakes, and that in matters of the highest import; yea, and such of them, as are supposed, generally, to lie within the reach of nature's light, are so obvious and discernible, that the evidence of the thing extorts an acknowledgment. To give but one instance; after the writer has made a great deal ado about Plato's knowledge of the *Trinity*,* a story which hath been oft told, but never yet proven, it is plainly acknowledged, that he speaks of the *Three Persons* of the *Deity* as of *three Gods*, and *three different principles*; which is, in plain terms, to throw down all that was built before, and prove that Plato knew neither the *Trinity*, nor the *one true God*. Finally, general sentences occur in those authors, which seem to import much more knowledge of God, than a further search into their writings will allow us to believe they had: For any one will quickly see, that in those general expressions, they spoke as children that understood not what they say, or at least, have but a very imperfect notion of it. And though this may seem a severe reflection on these great men; yet I am sure none shall impartially read them who will not own it just.

But now, to return to our subject, this *sufficient discovery* of God not being found amongst those, who were strangers to the scriptures and Christianity, let us next proceed to consider those, who have had access to the scriptures, and lived since the Christian religion obtained in the world. And here it must be owned, that since that time philosophers have much improven natural theology, and given a far better account of God, and demonstrated many of his attributes from reason, that were little known before, to the confusion of Atheists. From the excellent performances of this kind, which are many, I design not to detract. I am content that a due value be put upon them: but still I am for putting them only in their own place, and ascribing no more to them than is really their due. Wherefore, notwithstanding what has been now readily granted, I think I may confidently offer the few following remarks on them.

1. We might justly refuse them, as no proper measure of the *ability* of *unassisted reason*, in as much as it cannot be denied, that *the light*, whereby those discoveries have been made, was borrowed from the scriptures: of which none needs any other proof than merely to consider the vast improvement of knowledge, as to those matters, immediately after the spreading of Christianity, which cannot, with any shew of reason be otherwise accounted for, than by owning that this light was derived from the scriptures, and the observation and writings of Christians, which made even the Heathens ashamed of their former notions of God. But not to insist on this.

* M. Dacier's life of Plato, page 141.

2. Who have made those improvements of natural theology? Not the Heathens or Deists. It is little any of them have done this way. The accurate systems of natural theology have come from Christian philosophers, who do readily own that the scripture points them, not only to the notions of God they therein deliver, but also to many of the *proofs* likewise, and that their reason, if not thus assisted, would have failed them as much, as that of the old philosophers did them.

3. It is worthy our observation, that such of the Christians, who favour the Deists most, such as the Socinians and some others, do give most lame and defective accounts of God. They who lean much to *reason*, their reason leads them into those mistakes about the *nature* and *knowledge* of God, which tend exceedingly to weaken the *practical influence* of the notion of a God. And we have reason to believe that the Deists will be found to join with them, in their gross notions of God, as ignorant of the *free actions* of men, before they are done, and as not so particularly concerned about them in his *providence*, with many such-like notions, which sap the foundations of all practical regard to God.

4. But let the best of *these systems* be condescended on, they cannot be allowed to contain *sufficient discoveries* of God. For it is evident beyond contradiction, that they are neither full enough in explaining, what they in the general own, nor do they extend to some of those things which are of most necessity and influence to support *practical religion*. They prove a *providence*, but cannot pretend to give any such account of it, as can either encourage or direct to any dependence on, trust in, or practical improvement of it. And the like might be made appear of other perfections. Again, they cannot pretend to any tolerable account of the remunerative bounty, the pardoning mercy and grace of God, on which the whole of religion, as things now stand, entirely hangs. Can they open these things so far as is necessary to hold up religion in the world? They who know what religion is, and what they have done, or may do, will not say it.

5. In their proofs of these truths, there must be owned a *want of that evidence*, which is requisite to compose the mind in the persuasion of them, and establish it against objections. Let scripture light be laid aside, which removes objections; and let a man have no more to confirm him of those truths save these arguments, the difficulties daily occurring from obvious providences will jumble the observer so, that he will find these proofs scarcely sufficient to keep him firm in his assent to the truths; and if so, far less will they be able to influence his practice suitably against temptations to sin. Now this may arise, not so much from the *real weakness* of the arguments, which may be conclusive, as from this, that most of them are rather drawn *ab absurdo*, than from any clear light

about the nature of the object known; and hence there comes not that light along, as to difficulties, which is necessary to remove them. And though these arguments silence in dispute, and close the adversary's mouth; yet they do not satisfy the mind. Moreover some of no mean consideration, have pretended that many of these demonstrations, even as to some of the most considerable attributes of God, are inconclusive: Particularly they have asserted, that the *unity* of God was not to be proven by the *light of nature*, nor *special providence*. But not to carry the matter thus far, it is certain that the force of these demonstrations must lie very secret, that such persons, who owned the truths, and bore them good will, yet could not find it.

Much more might be said on this head, but I am not willing to invalidate these arguments, or even to shew all that might, perhaps, not only be said, but made appear against them. But whatever there is as to this, it is certain that the discoveries of God by nature's light being small, are easily clouded, by entangling difficulties arising from the dark occurrences of providence, and the natural weakness and unsteadiness of our minds, which are always to be found in matters sublime, and not attended with strong evidence.—And attention in this case will increase the darkness, and force on such an acknowledgment as Simonides made to Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, That "the longer he thought about God, the more "difficulty he found to give any account of him."

6. They must, whatever be allowed as to their validity in themselves, be owned to be of no use to the generality, nay, to the far greater part of mankind. No man who knows them, and knows the world, will pretend that the one half of mankind is able to comprehend the force of them. And so they are still in the dark about God; which quite everts the whole story about the sufficiency of the natural discoveries of a Deity.

7. It is plain, that there is no serving God, walking with or worshipping of him, without thoughts, and serious ones too, of him. Now, his nature and excellencies are infinite, how then shall we conceive of them? Our darkness and weakness will not allow us to think of him as he is, and conceive those perfections as they are *in him*. And to conceive otherwise is dangerous. We may mistake in other things without sin; but to frame wrong, and other conceptions of God and his excellencies, than the truth of the thing requires, is dangerous and sinful; for it frames *an idol*. Now, though this difficulty may be easy to less attentive minds; yet it will quite confound persons who are in earnest, and understand what they are doing, in their approaches to God. Nor can ever the minds of such be satisfied in our present state, otherwise than by God's telling us, how we are to conceive of him, and authorising us to do it in a way of condescension to our present dark and infirm state.

8. I cannot forbear to notice, as what wants not its own weight in this case, though in condescension we did a little wave arguments drawn from the *practical influence of truths*, that however great the improvements, as to notions of truths concerning the nature of the Deity may of late have been, yet the *effects* of *these notices* in their highest improvement, have been far from recommending them, as *sufficient* to *the end* we have now in view. *This natural theology* has rather made men more *learned* than more *pious*. Where scripture *truth* has not been received in its *love* and *power*, men have seldom been bettered by their improvements in natural theology. But we see in experience, that they who can prove most and best in these matters, evidence least regard to the Deity in their practice.

I shall add one observation more, which at once enforces the argument we are upon, against *the sufficiency of natural religion*, and cuts off a pretended retortion of it, against the Christian religion; and it is this: The religion the Deists plead for, and are obliged to maintain, is a religion that pleads acceptance on its own account, which has no provision against *guilt* and *escapes*, as shall be demonstrated hereafter; a religion which consequently must be *more perfect*, and so requires a *more exact knowledge* of the Deity in order to its support: whereas, the Christian religion is one which is calculated for man in his *fallen state*; and the *fall* is every where in it supposed, and a gracious provision made against *defects* in *knowledge*, and *unhallowed practical escapes*.

CHAP. V.

Proving the Insufficiency of Natural Religion from its defectiveness as to the worship of God.

THE argument we are to improve against the *sufficiency of natural religion* in this chapter, might have been considered as a branch of the foregoing: But, that we may be more distinct, and to shew a regard unto the importance of the matter, we shall consider it as a distinct argument by itself.

Now, therefore, when we are to speak of the *worship* of God, it is not of that inward veneration that consists in acts of the mind, such as esteem, fear, love, trust, and the like; but of the outward, stated, and solemn way of expressing this *inward veneration*. That there should not only be an inward regard to the Deity in our minds, influencing the whole of our outward deportment; but that besides, there should be fixed, outward, and solemn ways of exer-

cising and expressing these inward actings, seems evident beyond any reasonable exception—

1. From the general agreement of the world in this point. All the world has owned some worship necessary. Every nation and people had their peculiar way of worship.* It is true, most of them were ridiculous, many of them plainly wicked, and all of them vain; but this makes not against the thing in general; only it bespeaks the darkness of nature's light, as to the way of managing in particulars, that which in general it directs to.

2. The Deists themselves own this much. Herbert in his treatise, *de Religione Gentilium*, confesses it a second branch of the generally received religion, for which he pleads *that God is to be worshipped*. It is true, in his next, while he tells us that virtue and piety were owned to be the *principal means* of *worshipping* him, he would seem to preclude us from the benefit of the former acknowledgment. But yet he dares not assert, that this which he condescends on was the *only way*, and so pretend the worship we speak of *unnecessary*: But being to hold forth *the sufficiency of this natural religion*, he was loth to speak any more of that, which would lead him, if he had considered it, unto a discovery of its nakedness. But others of the Deists do own the necessity of such a worship, and pretend prayer and praise sufficient to this purpose, as he also doth in his other treatises, particularly *de Veritate*.†

3. The same reasons which plead for inward acts, peculiarly directed to this end, plead for outward veneration likewise. If we have minds capable of this inward veneration, so are we capable of outward expressions; and are under the same obligation to employ those latter sorts of powers to the honor of God, that binds us to the former. Nor is there more reason why, besides that transient regard we ought to pay him in all our actions, there should be inward acts peculiarly designed to express our inward veneration, than that there should be outward stated acts, peculiarly designed for the same purpose.

4. *The nature of society pleads loudly for this.* Mankind as united in societies, whether lesser, as families, or greater, as other societies, depend entirely on God; and therefore owe him reverence, and the expression of it in some joint and fixed way. Public benefits require public acknowledgments: and this sort of dependence on, and subjection to the Deity, should certainly have suitable returns.

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* Herbert de Veritate, page 271, 272.

† Herbert de Veritate, page 272. *Nos interea externum illum Dei cultum (sub aliqua religionis specie) ex omni seculo regione, gente evicimus.*—"In the "mean time we have proved this external worship of God, under some ap"pearance of religion, from every age, country, and nation."

5. It is incontrollably evident, that many in the world do shake off all regard to the Deity, and walk in an open defiance to him, and those laws which he has established. Certainly, therefore, it is the duty of such as keep firm, openly to testify their dependence on and regard to the Deity, which is not sufficiently done by the performance of those things, which are materially according to the appointment of God. For what regard to God there is, influencing to those outward acts, cannot be clearly discerned by on-lookers, who know not but somewhat, beside any regard to the authority of the lawgiver, may be at the bottom of all. It is therefore necessary that there be public, solemn actions, directly and plainly importing our avouchment of a regard to him, in opposition to these affronts that are publicly offered to him.

6. *This worship* is necessary in order to maintain and cherish that *inward veneration*. It is well known, however, how much we are bound to it, yet the sense of this obligation, and that veneration itself to which we are obliged, is not so deeply rivetted upon our minds, but it needs to be cherished, and the habits strengthened by actings. It is not so easy for men to do this by inward meditation, who for most part are little accustomed to this way, and can indeed scarce fix their minds in this inward exercise at all, especially if they have no fixed way of exercising it, but are left at liberty to choose their own way. Religion, therefore, must go out of the world, or there must be stated and fixed ways of exercising it. This is easily justifiable from experience, which shews, that where once public worship is disregarded, any other sort of respect to the Deity quickly falls of its own accord.

7. *It is necessary for the benefit of human society.* The foundations of human society are laid upon the notion of a God, and the sacredness of oaths, and the fixed notions of right and wrong, which all stand and fall together. Nor is there any way of keeping that regard to those things which are the props of human society, without such a worship of God, as that we plead for. This all the lawgivers of old were satisfied about, and took measures accordingly.

8. If religion has any *valuable end*, then certainly this must be one main part of it, to lead man to *future happiness*; which cannot, with any shew of reason, be alledged to consist in any thing besides *the enjoyment of* God. And it is plainly ridiculous to suppose, that mankind can be kept up in any fixed expectation of, or close pursuit after this, if not animated and encouraged by some, nay frequent experiences of commerce betwixt him and the Deity here. And it is foolish to pretend, that this is otherwise to be had, in any degree answerable to this end, in any other way than in the way of designed, fixed, solemn and stated worship.

Now, this much being said in the *general* for clearing the necessity of such *a worship* and the importance of it in *religion*; it remains that we prove *the light of nature insufficient* to direct us as to *the way* of it. And this we conceive may be easily made appear from the ensuing grounds.

1. The manifest mistakes all the world fell into, who were left in this matter to the conduct of the mere light of nature, abundantly evince the incompetency of nature's light for man's direction, with respect to the worship of God. Every nation had their own way of worship, and that stuffed with blasphemous, unworthy, ridiculous, ungrounded, impious and horrid rites and usages; of which there are innumerable accounts every where to be met with. We can no where in the Heathen world find any worship that is not manifestly unworthy of, and injurious to the glorious God. Surely *that light* that suffered the world to lose their way so evidently, must be sadly defective. Their worship was every where such, even where wise men were the instituters of it, that it could not satisfy any person who had any true notion of God; and was the scorn of the wise and discerning. Nor can it with any shew of reason be pleaded, that these defects and enormities are to be charged not on the *defectiveness of nature's light*, but the *negligence* of those who did not use it to that advantage it might have been used; since it has been above proven, that the only way we can judge what nature's light can do, is by considering what it *has done* somewhere or other. And these enormities did every where obtain: they were not peculiar to some places; but wherever men were left to the mere light of nature, there they fell into them.

2. These ways of worship, viz. *prayer* and *praise*, which are condescended upon by the Deists, and seem in general to have the countenance of reason; yet, as they are discovered by nature's light, can no way satisfy. Be it granted, that nature's light directs to them in general, and binds them on us as duty; yet it must be allowed, that this is not enough; for the difficulty is, how we shall in *particular* manage them to the *glory of God*, and our *own advantage*. The duty is stated in the general, and when we begin to think of compliance with it, we find the light of nature, like the Egyptian task-masters, set us our work, and demand *brick*, while yet it allows us *no straw*. What endless difficulties are we cast in, about the matter of our prayers and praises? What things shall we pray to God, and praise him for? How shall we be furnished with such discoveries of the nature, excellencies, and works of God; and what things are proper for us, as may be sufficient to guide us in our prayers and praises, and keep us up in a close attendance on these duties in the whole tract of our lives, without wearying or fainting? Are we, because we know not what is good or ill for us, to hold in mere generals, as the best of the philosophers thought?

If so, will the mind of man, for so long a tract of time, be able to continue in this general way, without nauseating? Or, shall we descend to particulars? If so, how shall materials be furnished to us for such particular addresses, who know so little of God's works, or our own wants? Again, who shall teach us the way and manner of praying and praising, which will be acceptable to God? Shall every one's fancy be the rule? If there be a fixed rule, which, and where is it? Again, What security have we from the mere light of nature, as to the success and acceptance of these duties? It will be to no advantage to except, that God requires of us no more than he has directed us in; for this is to beg the main question. Were it once granted, that no more is required than what nature's light directs to, there might be some countenance for this plea, that when it gives no directions in, will not be insisted upon, by God; but this is plainly refused, and so the difficulties remain. Nor is it to more advantage to pretend, that the substance being agreed to, God will not insist upon circumstances of worship: for the difficulties objected respect not merely the circumstances, but the very substantial parts of these duties. As to what may be pretended of the *influence of the hopes of eternal life*, towards the keeping up men in an attendance on duties; as to the particular manner of the performance of which, and the grounds of acceptance, they are entirely in the dark. This plea shall be fully considered afterwards. and as it is obvious, that no general supposal of benefit can for any long tract of time keep men steady in the performance of actions, about the nature and acceptance of which they are in doubt; so, it shall be made appear there is no ground from the mere light of nature for any such hope of future felicity, as can relieve in this case.

3. The plain confession of the more thoughtful, wise and discerning of the Heathen world, plainly proves this.* The followers of the famed Confucious in China, though they own that there is one supreme God, yet profess themselves ignorant of the way in which he is to be worshipped, and therefore think it safer to abstain from worshipping, than err in the assignation of improper honour to him. Plato, in his second Alcibiades, which he inscribes, "Of Prayer," makes it his business to prove, "that we know not how to manage prayer;" and therefore concludes it "safer to abstain altogether, "than err in the manner." Alcibiades is going to the temple to pray, Socrates meets him, dissuades him, and proves his inability to manage the duty, of which he is at length convinced; whereupon Socrates concludes, "You see, says he, that it is not at all safe "for you to go and pray in the temple—I am therefore of the "mind that it is much better for you to be silent.—And it is ne-

* Hornbeck de Conversione Gentilium, Lib. 5. Cap. 6. page 47.

" cessary you should wait for some person to teach you how you " ought to behave yourselves, both towards the gods and men. To " which Alcibiades said, and when will that time come, Socrates? " And who is he that will instruct me? With what pleasure should " I look on him? To which he replies, He will do it who takes a " true care of you. But methinks, as we read in Homer, that " Minerva dissipated the mist that covered Diomedes, and hindered " him from distinguishing a God from a man; so it is necessary, " that he should in the first place scatter the darkness that covers " your soul, and afterwards give you these remedies that are neces- " sary to put you in a condition of discerning good and evil; for at " present you know not how to make a difference. Alcibiades " says, I think I must defer my sacrifice to that time. Socrates " approves—You have reason, says he; it is more safe so to do, " than run so great a risk.* The famed Epictetus was so much " of the same mind, that he knew no way but to advise every one " to follow the custom of their country in worship."† Upon the same account Seneca rejects all this worship. And memorable is the confession of Jamblichus, a Platonic philosopher, who lived in the fourth century:—" It is not easy to know what God will be " pleased with, unless we be either immediately instructed by God " ourselves, or taught by some person whom God hath conversed " with, or arrive at the knowledge of it by some divine means or " other."‡ Thus you see how much these great men were be-misted in this matter, and may easily conclude what the case of the rest of mankind was.

4. The very nature of the thing seems to plead against the *sufficiency of reason* in this point: for it seems plainly to be founded on the clearest notions of nature's light, that the worship of God is to be regulated by the *will* and *pleasure* of God; which, if he reveal not, how can we know it? Hence it was that the Heathens never pretended *reason*, but always *revelation* for their worship. The governors all of them did this. And Plato tells us, " That " laws concerning divine matters must be had from the Delphick " Oracles."‖

Much more might be said on this head, were it needful: but I am apprehensive this is a point that the Deists will not be found to dispute with us; not only because they are no great friends to *this worship*, but because they can say so little on this head, which has any shew of reason: of which their famed leader *Herbert* was sufficiently aware, when he tells us in his third article, *That virtue is*

* We have the same account of Socrates Xenophon; of which Stanley, page 75.

† Epictet. Enchirid. Cap. 38.

‡ Seneca Epis. 95. Jambl. de Vita Pythag. Cap. 28.

‖ Plato de Legibus.

the principal worship of God; whereby he owns, that there is indeed another part of, which he dare not name, because he knows not what to say about it.

CHAP. VI.

Proving the Insufficiency of Natural Religion, from its Defectiveness as to the Discovery wherein Man's Happiness lies.

NEXT to the *glory of God*, the indisputably *supreme end* of man, and of the whole creation, of which I am not now to discourse, *the happiness of man*, is, past all peradventure, *his chief end*. Yea, perhaps, if we speak properly, except as abovesaid, it is his *only end*. For whatever man is capable of designing, is comprehended under this, being either what doth, or at least is judged to contain somewhat of *happiness* in it, or what is supposed to contribute to that wherein satisfaction is understood to consist. Every thing that a man aims at, is either aimed at *as good* in itself, or contributing to *our good*. The first is a part of *our happiness*; the last is not in proper speech so designed, but the *good* to which it contributes, and that still is as before a part of *our happiness*. If religion is therefore any way useful or sufficient, it must be so with respect to this end. And since religion not only claims some regard from man, but pleads the preference to all other things, and demands his *chief concern*, and his being employed about it as the *main business* of his life, it must either contribute more toward this end, than any thing else, nay be able to lead man to this end, otherwise it deserves not that regard which it claims, and is indeed of little, if any use to mankind. If then we are able to evince that natural religion is not *sufficient* to lead man to that happiness, which all men seek, and is indeed the *chief end* of man, there will be no place left for the pretence of its sufficiency, in so far as it is the subject of this controversy betwixt the Deists and us. And this we conceive may be made appear many ways. But in this chapter we shall confine ourselves to one of them.

If nature's light is not able to give any tolerable discovery of that wherein man's happiness lies, and that it may by him be obtained, then surely it can never furnish him with a religion that is able to conduct him to it. This cannot with any shew of reason be denied. It remains therefore that I make appear, that *nature's light is not able to discover wherein man's happiness lies, and its attainableness*. Now this I think is fully made out by the following considerations:

1. They who being left to the conduct of the mere light of nature, have sought after *that good* wherein man's happiness is to be had, could not come to any agreement or consistency among themselves. This is a point of the first importance, as being the hinge whereon the whole of a man's life must turn; the spring which must set a man a going, and give life to all his actions, and to this they must all be directed. This, if any other thing ought to be easily known; and if nature's light is a sufficient guide, it must give evident discoveries of. But, methinks, here is a great sign of a want of this evidence; great men, learned men, wise philosophers and industrious searchers of truth have split upon this point, into an endless variety of opinions; insomuch that Varro pretends to reckon up no less than 288 different opinions. May I not now use the argument of one of the Deists, in a case which he falsely supposes to be alike, and thus in his own words argue upon this point, (only putting in, *the discoveries of nature's light about happiness, or the evidence of those discoveries*, in place of the *evidence of the reasons of the Christian religion*, against which he argues): "If the dis- "coveries of it were evident, there could be no longer any con- "tention or difference about the chief good; all men would em- "brace the same and acquiesce in it: no prejudice would prevail "against the certainty of such a good."* "It is every man's "greatest business here to labour for his happiness, and conse- "quently none would be backward to know it. And, if all do not "agree in it, those marks of truth in it are not visible, which are "necessary to draw an assent."† But whatever there is in this, it is a most certain argument of darkness, that there is so great a difference, where the searchers are many, it is every one's interest to find, and the business and search is plied with great application.

2. The greatest of the philosophers have been plainly mistaken in it. They espoused opinions in this matter, which are not capable of any tolerable defence. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, defined them "happy who are competently furnished with outward "things, act honestly and live temperately."‡ Socrates held, that there was but one *chief good*, which is *knowledge*, if we may believe Diogenes Laertius in his life. Aristotle, if we may take the same author's words for it, places it in *virtue*, *health* and *outward conveniency*, which no doubt was his opinion, since he approved Solon's definition of the *chief good*;‖ and herein he was followed by his numerous school. Pythagoras tells us, that the "knowledge "of the perfections of the soul is the chief good." It is true, he

* Oracles of Reason, page 206.
† *Ibid*, page 201.
‡ Stanley, page 26. Life of Solon, Cap. 9.
‖ Stanley, page 540.

seems at other times to speak somewhat differently; of which we may speak afterwards. Zeno tells us, that it lies in "living according to nature. Cleanthes adds, that "according to nature is according to virtue." Crysippus tells us, that it is "to live according to expert knowledge of things which happen naturally."* It is needless to spend time in reckoning up innumerable others, who all run the same way, placing happiness in that which is not able to afford it, as being finite, of short continuance, fickle and uncertain. It is not my design to confute those several opinions. It is evident to any one, that they are all confined to time, and upon this very account fail of what can make us happy.

3. They who seem to come some nearer the matter, and talk sometimes of *conformity to God* being the *chief good;* that it is *our end* to be like God, and the like; as Pythagoras and some others;† but especially Plato, who goes further than any of the rest;‡ yet cannot justly be alledged to have made the discovery, because we have not any account of their opinions clearly delivered by themselves, but hints here and there gathered up from their writings, which are very far from satisfying us as to their mind.—Besides they are so variable, and express themselves so differently, in different places, that it is hard to find their mind; nay I may add, they are, industriously and of design obscure. This Alcinous the Platonic philosopher, tells us plainly enough in his *Doctrine of Plato*, which is inserted at length in Stanley's lives. He says, "that he thought the discovery of the *chief good* was not easy, "and if it were found out, it was not safe to be declared." And that for this reason, he did communicate his thoughts about it but to very few, and those of his most intimate acquaintance. Now the plain meaning of all this, in my opinion is, that he could not tell wherein man's *happiness* consists, or what *that* is which is able to afford it: or at most, that though one way or other in his travels, by his studies or converse, he had got some notions about it; yet he did not sufficiently understand them, and was not able to satisfy himself or others about them, and that therefore, he either entirely suppressed, or would not plainly speak out his thoughts, least the world should see his ignorance, and that though his words differed, yet in very deed he knew no more of the matter than others. For to say, that, upon supposition that his discoveries had been satisfying as to truth and clearness, and that he was capable to prove and explain them, they were not fit to be made known to the world, is to speak the grossest of nonsense; for nothing was so necessary to be known, and known universally, as the *chief good*, which every

* Stanley, page 462.
† *Ibid*, page 541.
‡ *Ibid*, page 192, Cap. 8.

one is obliged to seek after. To know this, and conceal the discovery, is the most malicious and invidious thing that can be thought of. And rather than charge this on Plato, I think it safer to charge ignorance on him. He speaks somewhat liker truth than others, while he tells us, "That happiness consists in the knowledge of the "chief good; that philosophers, who are sufficiently purified, are "allowed, after the dissolution of their bodies, to sit down at the "table of the Gods, and view the field of truth; that to be made "like God is the chief good; that to follow God is the chief good." Some such other expressions we find. But what does all this say? Does it inform us that Plato understood our happiness to consist in the *eternal enjoyment of God?* Some, who are loth to think that Plato missed any truth of importance which is contained in the scripture, think so: But for my part, I see no reason to convince me from all this, that Plato understood any thing tolerably about the *enjoyment of God*, either in time or after time, or that he was fixed and determined wherein the happiness of man consists, or that really any such state of future felicity is certainly attainable. All this was only a heaven of his own framing and fancy, fitted for philosophers; for the being of which, he could give no tolerable arguments. And all this account satisfies me no more that Plato understood wherein happiness consists, than the following does, that he knew the way of reaching it, which I shall transcribe from the same chapter of *Alcinous's doctrine of Plato:* "Beatitude is a good habit "of the genius, and this similitude to God we shall obtain, if we en-"joy convenient nature, in our manner, education and sense, ac-"cording to law, and chiefly by reason and discipline, and institu-"tion of wisdom, withdrawing ourselves as much as is possible from "human affairs, and being conversant in these things only which are "understood by contemplation: the way to prepare, and as it were, "to cleanse the demon that is in us, is to initiate ourselves into high-"er disciples; which is done by music, arithmetic, astronomy and "geometry, not without some respect of the body, by gymnastic, "whereby it is made more ready for the actions both of war and "peace." I pretend not to understand him here: But this I understand from him, that one of three is certain, either he understood not himself, or had no mind that others should understand; or that he was the most unmeet man in the world to instruct mankind about this important point, and to explain things about which the world was at a loss. When men speak at this rate, we may put what meaning we please upon their words.

4. It is plain that none of them have clearly come to know themselves, or inform others that *happiness is not to be had here;* that it *consists in the eternal enjoyment of God after time:* and *that this is attainable.* These are things whereabout there is a deep silence, not so much as a word of them, far less any proof. If ever we

were to expect such a thing we might look for it from those who have not merely touched at this subject by the bye, and in dark hints, but have discoursed of *moral ends*, on set purpose, such as Cicero and Seneca. Cicero frequently tells, that he designed to enrich his native country with a translation of all that was valuable in the Greek philosophers, he had perused them for this end, and thus accomplished, he sets himself to write of *moral ends*, which he does in five books. Here we may expect somewhat to the purpose: But if we do we are disappointed. The *first* book sets off Epicure's opinion about *happiness* with a great deal of rhetoric. The *second* overthrows it. The *third* represents the Stoic's opinion. And the *fourth* confutes it. The *fifth* represents and asserts the Peripatetic's opinion, which had been as easily overthrown as any of them. And this is all you are to expect here, without one word of God, the *enjoyment of him*, or any thing of that kind, which favours of a life after this. Seneca writes again, a book *de Vita Beata*, consisting of thirty-two chapters. Here we may find somewhat possibly. And indeed if one should hear him state the question, as he does in his second chapter, he would expect some great matters from him. *Quæramus quid optime factum sit, non quid usitatissimum: Et quid nos in possessione felicitatis æternæ constituat, non quid vulgo, veritatis pessimo interpreti, probatum sit. Vulgus autem tam chlamydatos, quam coronam voco.** What may we not now expect? But after this, I assure you, you are to look for no more words about eternity, nor any thing more, but a jejune discourse in pretty sentences, about the Stoic's opinion, representing that a man would be happy, if his passions were extinct, and he was perfectly pleased with the condition he is in, be it what it will. Now after this, who can dream that *nature's light* is sufficient to satisfy here? Is every man able to discover that which philosophers, the greatest of them, after the greatest application, failed so signally about, that scarcely any of them came near it, and none of them reached it?

5. Nor will it appear strange, that the Heathen philosophers of old should be so much at a loss about *future happiness*, to any one who considers how difficult, if not impossible, it must be for any, who rejects revelation, and betakes himself to the mere light of nature, to arrive at the wished for, and necessary assurance of eternal felicity after this life, even at this present time, after all the great improvements, which the rational proofs of a future state have obtained, since Christianity prevailed in the world. If nature's

* "Let us inquire what is best to be done, and not what is most common; "and what puts us in possession of eternal felicity, and not what is approved "by the vulgar—the worst judges of truth. By the vulgar I mean the rich "and great men, as well as the mob."

light, now under its highest improvements, proves unable to afford full assurance, and still leaves us to fluctuate in uncertainty about future happiness; no wonder that they should be in the dark, who were strangers to these improvements.

That the arguments for a future state, since Christianity obtained, have received a vast improvement from Christian divines and philosophers, cannot modestly be denied. The performances of Plato and Cicero, on this point, which were the best among the ancients, are, when compared with our late Christian writers, but like the trifles of a boy at school, or the rude essays of a novice, in comparison to the most elaborate and complete performances of the greatest masters; if they bear even the same proportion. He who knows not this, knows nothing in these matters. Yea, to that degree have they improven those arguments, that it is utterly impossible for any man, who gives all their reasons for the continuance of the soul after death, with their answers to the trifling pretences of the opposers of this conclusion, a fair hearing and due consideration, to acquiesce rationally in the contrary assertion of *Atheists* and *mortal Deists;* or not to favour, at least this opinion, as what is highly probable, if not absolutely certain.

But after all, if we are left to seek assurance of this from the *unassisted* light of nature, that *certainly God has provided for, and will actually bestow upon man, and more especially man who is now a sinner, future and eternal felicity,* we will find ourselves plunged into inextricable difficulties, out of which the light of nature will find it very difficult, if not impossible to extricate us. It is one thing to be persuaded of the future separate subsistence of our souls after death, and another to know in what condition they shall be; and yet more to be assured, that *after death our souls shall be possessed of eternal happiness.* It is precisely about this last point that we are now to speak. The arguments drawn from nature's light will scarce fix us in the steady persuasion of future and eternal felicity. There is a great odds betwixt our knowledge of future punishments, and the grounds whereby we are led to it, and our persuasion of future and eternal rewards. Upon inquiry the like reasons will not be found for both. Our notices about eternal rewards, when the promises of it contained in the scriptures are set aside, will be found liable to many objections, hardly to be solved by the mere light of nature, which do not so much affect the proofs advanced for future punishments. Besides, since the entrance of sin, its universal prevalence in the world, and the consequences following upon it, have so long benighted man, as to any knowledge that he otherwise might have had about eternal happiness, that now it will be found a matter of the utmost difficulty, if not a plain impossibility, for him to reach assurance of eternal felicity by the mere light of nature, however improven.

The pleas drawn from the *holiness* and *justice* of God, say much for the certain punishment, after this life, of many notorious offenders, who have wholly escaped punishment here; especially as they are strengthened by other collateral considerations clearing and enforcing them.

But whether the pleas for future and eternal rewards, from the justice and goodness of God on the one hand; and the sufferings of persons really guilty of sin, but in comparison of others virtuous, on the other; will with equal firmness conclude, that God is *obliged* to, or certainly *will*, reward their *imperfect* virtue, and compensate their sufferings, may, and perhaps not without reason, be questioned.

That it is congruous that virtue should be rewarded, may perhaps easily be granted. But, what that reward is, which it may from divine justice or bounty claim, it will not be easy for us to determine, if we have no other guide than the mere light of nature. The man who perfectly performs his duty is secured against the fears of punishment, and has reason to rest fully assured of God's acceptance and approbation of what is every way agreeable to his will. He has a perfect inward calm in his own conscience, is disturbed with no challenges, and has the satisfaction and inward complacency, resulting from his having acquitted himself according to his duty: His conscience assures him he has done nothing to provoke God to withdraw favours already given, or to withhold further favours. And though he cannot easily see reason to think God obliged, either to continue what he freely gave, or accumulate further effects of bounty upon him, or to protract his happiness to eternity; yet he has the satisfaction of knowing, that he hath not rendered himself unworthy of any favour. This reward is the necessary and unavoidable consequence of *perfect obedience*.

But this comes not up to the point. That which the light of nature must assure us of is, That virtuous men, on account of their virtue, may claim and expect, besides this, a further reward, and that of no less consequence than eternal felicity. Now, if I mistake it not, when the promise of God, which cannot be known without revelation, is laid aside, the mere light of nature will found difficult to fix upon solid grounds, for any assurance as to this. Many thorny difficulties must be got through. Not a few perplexing questions must be solved. If it is said, that the justice of God necessarily obliges him, besides that reward necessarily resulting from perfect obedience, (of which above,) further to recompence, even the most exact and perfect performance of our duty, antecedently to any promise given to that effect, with future and eternal felicity; it may be inquired, How it shall be made appear that virtue, suppose it to be as perfect as you will, can be said to *merit*, and to merit so *great* a reward? May not God, without in-

justice, turn to *nothing* an innocent creature? Sure I am, no mean nor incompetent judges have thought so.* Where is the injustice of removing or taking away what he freely gave, and did not promise to continue? Is it modest or safe for us, without the most convincing evidences of the inconsistency of the thing, to limit the power of God, or put a *cannot* on the Almighty. And does not the very possibility of the annihilation of an innocent creature, in a consistency with justice, though God, for other reasons, should never think fit to do it, entirely enervate this plea? If God, without injustice, may take away the *being* of an innocent creature, how is it possible to evince, that in justice, he must reward it with *eternal happiness?* Again, if we may, for our virtue, claim eternal felicity, as due in justice, may it not be inquired, What exercise of virtue—for how long a time continued—is sufficient to give us this title to eternal rewards? If the bounty and goodness of God is insisted on, as the ground of this claim, the plea of justice seems to be deserted. And here again it may be inquired, Whether the goodness of God is necessary in its egress? Whether the bounty of God ought not to be understood to respect those things which are absolutely at the giver's pleasure to grant or withhold? Whether, in such matters, we can be assured that bounty will give us this or that, which, though we want, is not in justice due, nor secured to us by any promise? Further, it may be inquired how far must goodness extend itself as to rewards? Is it not supposable, that it may stop short of eternal felicity, and think a less reward sufficient? Of so great weight have these, and the like difficulties appeared to not a few, and those not of the more stupid sort of mankind, that they have not doubted to assert boldly, that even innocent man, without revelation, and a positive promise, could never be assured of eternal rewards. And how the light of nature can disengage us from these difficulties, were man perfectly innocent, I do not well understand.

But whatever there is of this, the *entrance of sin* and the consideration of man's case as involved in *guilt*, has cast us upon new and yet greater difficulties. From this present condition wherein we find all mankind without exception involved, a whole shoal of difficulties emerge, never, I am afraid, to be removed by *unassisted reason.*

Now it may be inquired, what obedience is it that can entitle us to eternal felicity? If none save that which is *perfect* will serve, who shall be the better for this reward? Who can pretend to this perfect or sinless obedience? If *imperfect* obedience may, how shall we be sure of this? How shall he who deserves punishment,

* See the Excellency of Theology, &c. by T. H. R. Boil, page 25, 26, 27, &c. and Consid. about the Recon. of Reason and Rel. by T. E. page 21, 22.

claim, demand and expect reward, a great reward, yea, the greatest reward—eternal happiness? If the goodness of God is pleaded, and it is said, that though we cannot expect in *strict justice* to have our *imperfect obedience* rewarded; yet we may hope it from the bounty of God? Besides, what was above moved against this, in a more plausible case, when we were speaking of *innocent man*, it may be further inquired, whether, though infinite bounty might deal thus graciously with man, if he were perfectly righteous, it may not yet withhold its favours, or at least stop short of eternal felicity, with the best among sinners? Again, what *degree* of imperfection is it that will prejudge this claim? What may consist with it? Who is good in that sense, which is necessary to qualify him for this expectation? Is there any such person existent? What way shall we be sure of this? Is it to be measured by outward actions only, or are inward principles and aims to come in consideration? Who can know these save God? If it be said, we can know ourselves to be such: I answer, how shall we maintain any confidence of future, nay eternal rewards, while conscience tells that we deserve punishment? What if by the mere light of nature we can never be assured of forgiveness? How shall we then by it, be sure of eternal rewards? If we are not rewarded here, how can we know but that it has been for our sins that good things have been withheld from us? May not this be presumed to be the consequence of our known sins, or more covert evils, which self-love has made us overlook? If we suffer, yet do we suffer more than our sins deserve, or even so much? If we think so, will we be sustained competent judges of the quality of offences, and their demerit, which are done against God, especially when we are the actors? To whom does it belong to judge? If we meet with some part, for ye can never prove it is all, of demerit or deserved punishment of your sins here, will this conclude that ye shall be exempted from suffering what further God may in justice think due to them, and you on their account hereafter? What security have ye that ye shall escape with what is inflicted on you here? And not only so, but instead of meeting with what ye further deserve, obtain rewards which ye dare scarcely say ye deserve? If God spare at present a noted offender, who cannot without violence to reason be supposed a subject meet for pardon or for a reward, and reserve the whole punishments due to his crimes, to the other world; but in the mean while, sees meet to inflict present punishment on thee, though less criminal, perhaps to convince the world, that even lesser offenders shall not escape; if, I say, he deal thus, is there no way for clearing his justice, but by conferring eternal happiness on thee? Why, if he inflict what further punishment is due to thee, in exact proportion to thy less atrocious crimes; and punish the other with evils proportioned to his more atrocious crimes, and make him up by

the severity of the stroke for the delay of the punishment; if I say, thus he do, I challenge any man to tell me where the injustice lies! And may not the like be said as to any other virtuous person, or whom thou supposest to be such, who meets with sufferings?

Nor do less perplexing difficulties attend those other pleas for future happiness to man, at least, in his present condition; which are drawn from God creating us capable of future happiness, implanting desires, and giving us gusts of it: All which would be given in vain, if there was no happiness designed for man after time.

But how by this we can be secured of eternal happiness, I do not well see. Nor do I understand how the difficulties which may be moved against this, can be resolved. It may be inquired, whether this desire of happiness, said to be implanted in our natures, is really any thing distinct from that natural tendency, of the creature to its own perfection and preservation, which belongs to the being of every creature, with such difference as to degrees and the manner, as their respective natures require? If it is no more than this, it must be allowed essential to every rational creature: And if every rational creature has an essential attribute, which infers an obligation on God to provide for it eternal happiness, and put it in possession of this felicity, if no fault intervene, doth it not thence necessarily, follow, that God cannot possibly, without injustice, turn to nothing any innocent rational creature; nay, nor create any one, which it is possible for him again to annihilate without injustice? For if we should suppose it possible for God to do so, and thus without injustice frustrate this desire, where is the force of the argument? And is it not a little bold to limit God thus? I need not enter into the debate, whether there is any supposable case, wherein infinite wisdom may think it fit to do so? That dispute is a little too nice: For on the one hand, it will be hard for us to determine it positively, that infinite wisdom must, in any case we can suppose, think it fit to destroy or turn to nothing an innocent creature; and on the other hand, it is no less rash to assert, that our not knowing any case, proves that really there is none such known to the only wise God. Besides, if we allow it only possible, in a consistency with justice and veracity, for God to do it, I am afraid the argument has lost its force. Further, it may be inquired, whether the rational creature can in duty desire an eternal continuation in being, otherwise than with the deepest submission to the sovereign pleasure of God, where he has given no positive promise? If submission belongs to it, all certainty vanishes, and we must look elsewhere for assurance of eternal happiness. A desire of it, if God see meet to give it, can never prove that certainly he will give it. If it is said, that the creature without submission or fault may insist upon and claim eternal happiness; I do not see how this can be proven.

But again, do not these desires respect the whole man, consisting of soul and body? Doth not death dissolve the man? Are not these desires apparently frustrated? How will the light of nature certainly infer from those desires, gusts, &c. that the whole man shall have eternal felicity, while we see the man daily destroyed by death? Can this be understood without revelation? Does the light of nature teach us that there will be a resurrection? I grant, that without the supposal of a future existence, we cannot easily understand what end there was worthy of God for making such a noble creature as man: But while we see man, on the other hand, daily destroyed by death, and know nothing of the resurrection of the body, which is the case of all those who reject revelation, we shall not know what to conclude, but must be tossed in our minds, and be at loss how to reconcile those seeming inconsistencies: which gave a great man occasion to observe, "That there can be "no reconciliation of the doctrine of future rewards and punish-"ments, to be righteously administered upon a supposition of the "separate everlasting subsistence of the soul only."* And for proof of this, he insists on several weighty considerations, which I cannot transcribe.

But, should we give up all this, will this desire of happiness prove that God designed it for man, whether he carried himself well or not? If it prove not that sinful man may be happy, or that eternal happiness is designed for man, who is now a sinner, what are we the better for it? Are we not all more or less guilty? What will it help us, that we were originally designed for, and made capable of future felicity, if we are now under an incapacity of obtaining it? Do we not find that we have fallen short of perfect obedience? And can those desires assure us that God will pardon, yea reward us, and that with the greatest blessing which innocent man was capable of? Moreover, before we end this discourse, I hope to make it appear, that by *mere light of nature* no man can assuredly know that *sin shall be pardoned*; and if so, it is in vain to pretend, that we can be assured of eternal felicity in our present condition. They who have sinned less and suffered more in this life, shall not be so severely punished in that which is to come, as they who have sinned more grievously and escaped without punishment here, this reason assures us of: But it can scarcely so much as afford us a colourable plea for eternal rewards, to any virtue that is stained with the least sin. The scriptures make mention of a happiness promised to innocent man upon perfect obedience; and of salvation to guilty man upon faith in JESUS CHRIST. Beside these two, I know no third sort. As to the last, the light of nature is entirely silent, as we shall see afterwards. Whether it can alone prove the first is

* Dr. Owen on Heb. vi. ver. 1, 2. Vol. 3, page 21.

a question: But that man in his present condition cannot be better for it, is out of question.

9. Were it granted that these arguments are conclusive, yet the matter would be very little mended: For it is certain, that these arguments are too thin to be discerned by the dim eyes of the generality, even though they had tutors who would be at pains to instruct them. Yea, I fear that they rather beget suspicions than firm persuasions in the minds of philosophers. They are of that sort, which rather silence than satisfy. Arguments *ab absurdo*, rather force the mind to assent, than determine it cheerfully to acquiesce in the truth as discovered. Other demonstrations carry along with them a discovery of the nature of the thing, which satisfies it in some measure. Hence they have a force, not only to engage, but to keep the soul steady in its adherence to truth; but these oblige to implicit belief as it were, and therefore the mind easily wavers and loses view of truth; and is no longer firm, than it is forced to be so, by a present view of the argument. If learned men were always observant of their own minds, and as ingenuous as the Auditor is in Cicero, in his acknowledgment about the force of Plato's arguments for the *immortality of the soul*,* they would make some such acknowledgment as he does. After he has told, that he has read oftener than once, Plato's arguments for the *immortality of the soul*, which Cicero had recommended in the foregoing discourse as the best that were to be expected, he adds, "*Sed "nescio quomodo, dum lego assentior: cum posui librum, & me- "cum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assentio om- "nis illa elabitur.*"† In like manner might others say, when I pore upon those arguments I assent; but when I begin to look on the matter, I find there arises not such a light from them, as is able to keep the mind steady in its assent. More especially will it be found so, if we look not only to the matter, but to the difficulties which offer about it. Yet this steadiness is of absolute necessity in this case, since a respect to this must be supposed always prevalent, in order to influence to a steady pursuit. The learned Sir Matthew Hale observes, that, "It is very true, that partly by "universal tradition, derived probably from the common parent of "mankind, partly by some glimmerings of natural light in the na- "tural consciences, in some, at least, of the Heathen, there seem- "ed to be some common persuasion of a future state of rewards "and punishments. But first it was weak and dim, and even in "many of the wisest of them overborn; so that it was rather a "suspicion, or at most, a weak and faint persuasion, than a strong

* Cicero Tus. Quest. Lib. 1.

† "But I know not how it happens, that although I assent to him as long as "I am reading, yet when I have laid down the book, and begun to think with "myself of the immortality of the soul, all that assent vanishes."

" and firm conviction: And hence it became very unoperative and " ineffectual to the most of them, when they had greatest need of " it; namely, upon imminent or incumbent temporal evils of great " pressure. But, where the impression was firmest among them, " yet still they were in the dark what it was."

7. It is further to be considered, that it is not the general persuasion that there is a state of future happiness and misery, which can avail;* but there must be a discovery of that happiness in its nature, or wherein it consists; its excellency and suitableness, to engage man to look on it as his chief good, pursue it as such, persevere in the pursuit over all opposition, and forego other things, which he sees and knows the present pleasure and advantage of, for it. Now, such a view the light of nature can never rationally be pretended to be able to give: If it is, let the pretender shew us where, and by whom such an account has been given and verified; or let him do it himself. And if this is not done, as it never has, and I fear not to say never can be done; it would not mend the matter, though we should forego all that has been abovesaid, (as was above insinuated,) which yet we see no necessity of doing.

8. I might here tell how faintly the deists use to speak upon this head. Though upon occasion, they can be positive; yet at other times they speak modestly about the being of a future state of happiness, and tells us, " That rewards and punishments hereafter, " though the notion of them has not been universally received, the " Heathens disagreeing about the doctrine of the immortality of " the soul, may yet be granted to seem reasonable, because they are " deduced from the doctrine of providence,—and that they may " be granted parts of natural religion, because the wisest men have " inclined to hold them amongst the Heathen,"† &c. and now do in all opinions. And as they seem not over certain as to the being of future rewards and punishments, so they plainly own they can give no account what they are. " *Quæ vero, qualis, quanta, &c.* " *hæc vita secunda vel mors fuerit ob defectum conditionum ad ve-* " *ritatus istius conformationem postulatarum,* sciri nequit," says the learned *Herbert.*‡

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* Herbert de Veritate, page 59.

† Oracle of Reason, page 201.

‡ *De Ver.* page 57. *& Alibi sæpius.*—" But what, of what kind, and how " great, this second life or death shall be, can not be known, for want of those " conditions that are required for the confirmation of the truth of it."

CHAP. VII.

Nature's Light affords not a sufficient Rule of Duty. Its Insufficiency hence inferred.

THERE is certainly no other way of attaining happiness, than by pleasing God. Happiness is no other way to be had, than from him, and no other way can we reasonably expect it from him, but in the way of *duty* or *obedience*. Obedience must either be with respect to those things which immediately regard the honor of the Deity, or in other things. The *insufficiency of natural religion as to worship*, has been above demonstrated. That it is wanting as to the latter, viz. those duties which we called, for distinction's sake, *duties of moral obedience*, is now to be proven.—That man is subject to God, and so in every thing obliged to regulate himself according to the prescription of God, has been above asserted, and the grounds of this assertion, have been more than insinuated. Now if nature's light is not able to afford a complete directory as to the whole of man's conduct, in so far as the Deity is concerned, it can never be allowed sufficient to conduct man in religion, and lead him to eternal happiness: While it leaves him at a loss as to sufficient rules for universal virtue, which even Deists own to be the principal way of serving God and obtaining happiness. It is one of the principal things to which this is to be ascribed, and whereon man's hopes must reasonably be supposed to lean, if he is left to the mere conduct of the light of nature. Now the insufficiency of nature's light in this point will be fully made appear, from the ensuing considerations; some of which are excellently discoursed by the ingenious Mr. Locke in his *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scripture.** If he had done as well in other points as in this, he had deserved the thanks of all that wish well to Christianity: But so far as he follows the truth we shall take his assistance, and improve some of his notions, adding such others, as are by him omitted, which may be judged of use to the case in hand.

1. Then we observe, that no man left to the conduct merely of nature's light, has offered us a *complete body of morality*. Some parts of our duty are pretty fully taught by philosophers and politicians. "So much virtue as was necessary to hold societies together, and to contribute to the quiet of governments, the civil "laws of commonwealths taught, and forced upon men that lived "under magistrates. But these laws, being for the most part made "by such, who have no other aims but their own power, reached

* Reas. of Christ. page 257.

" no further than those things that would serve to tie men together " in subjection; or at most, were directly to conduce to the pros- " perity and temporal happiness of any people. But *natural re-* " *ligion* in its full extent, was no where, that I know of, taken " care of by the force of natural reason. It should seem by the " little that hitherto has been done in it, that it is too hard a thing " for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon " its true foundations, with a clear and convincing light."* Some parts have been noticed, and others quite omitted. A complete system of morality in its whole extent has never been attempted by the mere light of nature, much less completed.

2. To gather together the scattered rules that are to be met with in the writings of *morality*, and weave these shreds into a competent *body of morality*, in so far as even the particular direction of any one man would require, is a work of that immense labour, and requires so much learning, study and attention, that it has never been performed, and never like to be performed, and quite surmounts the capacity of most, if not of any one man. So that neither is there a complete body of morality given us by any one. Nor is it ever likely to be collected from those who have given us parcels of it.

3. Were all the moral directions of the ancient sages collected, it would not be a system that would be any way useful to the body of mankind. It would consist for most part of enigmatical, dark and involved sentences, that would need a commentary too long for vulgar leisure to peruse, to make them intelligible. Any one that is in the least measure acquainted with the writings of the philosophers will not question this. Of what use would it be to read such morality as that of Pythagoras, whose famed sentences were, " Poke not in the fire with a sword; stride not over the beam of a " balance; sit not upon a bushel; eat not the heart; take up your " burthen with help; ease yourself of it with assistance; have al- " ways your bed clothes well tucked up; carry not the image of " God about you in a ring," &c. Was this like to be of any use to mankind? No surely, some of them indeed speak more plain, some of them less so; but none of them sufficiently plain to be understood by the vulgar.

4. Further, were this collection made, and, upon other accounts, unexceptionable; yet it would not be sufficiently full to be an universal directory. For, 1. Many important duties would be wanting. Self-denial, that consists in a mean opinion of ourselves, and leads to a submitting, and passing from all our most valuable concerns, when the honor of God requires it, is the fundamental duty of all religion, that which is of absolute necessity to a due acknow-

* Reas. of Christ. page 268.

ledgement of man's subjection and dependence; and yet we shall find a deep silence in all the moralists about it. Which defect is the more considerable, that the whole of our apostacy is easily reducible to this one point, *an endeavor to subject the will, concerns and pleasures of God to our own.* And no act of obedience to him, can, without gross ignorance of his nature, and unacquaintedness with the extent of his knowledge, be presumed acceptable, which flows not from such a principle of self-denial, as fixedly prefer the *concerns* of God's glory to all other things. Again, what duty have we more need of, than that which is employed in forgiving enemies, nay in loving them? We have frequent occasions for it. If we are not acquainted that this is duty, we must frequently run into the opposite sin. But where is this taught among the Heathens? Further, where shall we find a directory as to the inward frame and actings of our minds, guiding us how to regulate our thoughts, our designs? Some notice is taken of the outward behaviour; but little of that which is the *spring* of it. Where is there a rule for the direction of our thoughts as to *objects* about which they should be employed, or as to the manner wherein they are to be conversant about them? These things are of great importance, and yet by very far out of the ken of unenlightened nature. Divine and spiritual things were little known, and less thought of by philosophers. 2. As this system would be defective as to particular duties of the highest importance; so it would be quite defective as to the grounds of those duties which are enjoined. It is not enough to recommend duty, that it is useful to us, or the societies we live in. When we act only on such grounds, we shew some regard to ourselves, and the societies whereof we are members; but none to God. Where are these cleared to be the *laws* of God? Who is he that presses obedience upon the consciences of men, from the consideration of God s *authority* stamped upon these laws he prescribes? And yet without this, you may call it what you will; obedience you cannot call it. It is well observed by Mr. Locke,—"Those just measures of right and wrong, which ne-"cessity had any where introduced, the civil laws prescribed, or "philosophers recommended, stood not on their true foundations. "They were looked on as bonds of society, and conveniences of "common life, and laudable practices: But where was it that their "obligation was thoroughly known, and allowed, and they received "as precepts of a law, of the highest law, the law of nature? That "could not be without the clear knowledge of the lawgiver, and the "great rewards or punishments for those that would not, or would "obey. But the religion of the Heathens, as was before observed, "little concerned itself in their morals. The priests that delivered "the oracles of heaven, and pretended to speak from the gods, "spoke little of virtue and a good life. And on the other side, the

"philosophers who spoke from reason, made not much mention of "the Deity in their ethicks."*

5. Not only would this rule be defective and lame, but it would be found *corrupt* and *pernicious*. For, 1, Instead of leading them in the way, it would in many instances lead them aside. We should have here Epictetus binding you to *temporize*, and "worship "the gods after the fashion of your country."† You should find Pythagoras "forbidding you to pray for yourself to God,"‡ because you know not what is convenient. You should find Aristotle and Cicero commending *revenge* as a *duty*. The latter you should find defending Brutus and Cassius for *killing* Caesar, and thereby authorising the murder of any magistrates, if the actors can but persuade themselves that they are tyrants. Had we nothing to conduct us in our obedience and loyalty, but the sentiments of philosophers, no prince could be secure either of his life or dignity. You should find Cicero pleading for *self-murder*, from which he can never be freed, nor can any tolerable apology be made for him. Herein he was seconded by Brutus, Cato, Cassius, Seneca and others innumerable. Many of them practised it; others applauded of their sentiments in this matter. You may find a large account in Mr. Dodwel's *Apology for the Philosophical Performances of Cicero*, prefixed to Mr. Parker's translation of his book *de Finibus*. And you may find the Deists justifying this in the preface to the *Oracles of Reason*, wherein Blount's killing of himself is justified. Of the same mind was Seneca, who expressly advises the practice of it. We should here find *customary swearing commended*,‖ if not by their precepts, yet by the examples of the *best moralists*, Plato, Socrates, and Seneca. In whom numerous instances of oaths by Jupiter, Hercules, and by beasts, do occur. In the same way we should find *unnatural lust recommended*.¶ Aristotle practised it. And Socrates is foully belied, if he loved not the same vice. Whence else could *Socratici Cinædi* come to be a proverb in Juneval's days. Pride and self-esteem were among their virtues. Which gives me occasion to observe, that this one thing overturned their whole morality. Epictetus, one of the best of all their moralists, tells us, "That the constitution and image of a philosopher "is to expect good, as well as fear evil, only from himself."**— Seneca urgeth this every where—"*Sapiens tam æquo animo om-*"*nia apud alios videt, contemnitque, quam* Jupiter: *Et hoc* "*se magis suspicit, quod* Jupiter *uti illis non potest, sapiens non*

* Reasonableness of Christianity, page 278.
† Epict. Enchirid. Cap. 38.
‡ Diog. Laert. Vit. Pyth. page 7.
‖ Seneca de Ira, Lib. 3. Cap. 15.
¶ Diog. Laert Vita Arist. Lib. 5. page 323.
** Epict. Ench. Cap. 27.

"*vult.*"* And again, "*Est aliquid quo sapiens antecedat Deum.* "*Ille naturae beneficio, non suo, sapiens est.*† *Incomptus* "*vir sit externis & insuperabilis, miratorque tantum sui.*"‡ "Pride and self-esteem was a disease epidemical amongst them, "and seems wholly incurable by any notions that they had. Some "arrived to that impudence to compare themselves with, nay, "prefer themselves before their own gods. It was either a hor- "rible folly to deify what they postponed to their own self-estima- "tion, or else it was a stupendous effect of their pride to prefer "themselves to the gods that they worshipped. Never any man "amongst them proposed the honor of their gods as the chief end "of their actions, nor so much as dreamed of any such thing; it is "evident that the best of them in their best actions reflected still "back to themselves, and determinated there, designing to set up "a pillar to their own fame."‖ That known sentence of Cicero, who speaks out plainly what others thought, will justify this severe censure given by this worthy person, *Vult plane virtus honorem: Nec virtutis ulla alia merces.*** Were it needful, I might write volumes to this purpose, that would make one's flesh tremble to read. They who desire satisfaction in this point, may find it largely done by others. I shall conclude this first evidence of the *corruption* of their *morality*, with this general reflection of the learned Amyrald in his *Treatise of Religions:* "Scarce can there be found "any commonwealth, amongst those, which have been esteemed "the best governed, in which some grand and signal vice has not "been excused, or permitted, or even sometimes recommended by "public laws."†† 2. Not only did they enjoin *wrong* things; but they enjoined what was *right* to a *wrong end*, yea even their best things, as we heard just now, aimed at their own honor. We have heard Cicero to this purpose telling plainly *that honor was their aim.* Or of what the poet said of Brutus killing his own sons when they intended the overthrow of the liberty of their country,

Vicit amor patriæ laudumque immensa cupido,‡‡

is the most that can be pleaded for most of them. Others are

* Seneca, Epist. 73.—"A wise man beholds and despises all things that he "sees in the possession of others, with as easy a mind as Jupiter himself.— "And in this he admires himself the more, that Jupiter cannot use those "things which he despises, whereas the wise man can use them, but will not.

† *Ib.* Epist. 53. "There is something in which a wise man excels God, as "God is wise by the benefit of his nature, and not by his own."

‡ *Ib. de vita Beata*, Cap. 8. —"Let a man be incorruptible and incorrigible "be external things, and an admirer of himself alone."

‖ Sir Char. Wolseley's Reason of Scripture Belief, page 118.

** *Cicero de Amicitia.*—"Virtue certainly will have honor, nor is there any "other reward of virtue."

†† See instances to this purpose in a discourse of Moral Virtue, and its difference from Grace, page 225.

‡‡ "The love of his country, and his immense desire of praise, overcame him."

plainly blasphemous, as we have heard from Seneca, designing to be above God by his virtue. At this rate this philosophy talks very oft: "Let philosophy," says he, "minister this to me, that it "render me equal to God."* To the maintenance of this, their notions about the soul of man contributed much; stiling it a piece clipt from God, Ἀπόσπασμα τοῦ Θεοῦ, or a part of God, τοῦ Διὸς Μέρος, as Epictetus speaks. Horace calls it *divinæ particula auræ*. Cicero in his *Somnium Scip.* tells us what they thought of themselves, *Deum scito te esse*—"Know thyself to be a God." And accordingly the Indian Brachmans vouched themselves for Gods. And indeed they, who debased their Gods below men, by their abominable characters of them, it was no wonder to find them prefer themselves to them. Nor did any run higher this way than Plato. Let any one read his arguments for the *immortality of the soul*, and if they prove any thing, they prove it *a God*. Thus they quite corrupted all they taught, by directing it to wrong ends. 3. This system would corrupt us as to the *fountain of virtue* and its *principle*, teaching us to trust ourselves, and not depend on God for it. We have heard some speak to this purpose already; and Cicero may well be allowed to speak for the rest. "*A Deo tantum* "*rationem habemus: Bonam autem rationem aut non bonam a* "*nobis.*"† And a little after, near the close of his book, after he has owned our external advantages of learning to be from God, he subjoins—"*Virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit, ni-* "*mirum recte: Propter virtutem enim jure laudamur, & in vir-* "*tute recte gloriamur, quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo,* "*non a nobis haberemus.*"‡ Thus we see how corrupt they were in this point, and it is here easily observable whence they were corrupted as to their chief end. He that believes that he has any thing that is not from God, will have somewhat also that he will not refer to him, as his chief end. 4. The corruption of this system, would in this appear, that it would be *full of contradictions*. Here we shall find nothing but endless jars; one condemning as abominable, what another approves and praises: Whereby we should be led to judge neither right, rather than any of them. A man who, for direction, will betake himself to the declaration of the philosophers, goes into a wild wood of uncertainty, and into an endless maze, from which he should never get out. Plenty of instances, confirming these two last mentioned observations, might be adduc-

* Seneca, Epistle 48.

† Cicero de Natura Deorum, Lib. 3. P. mihi, 173—"We have only reason "from God, but we have good or bad reason from ourselves."

‡ "But nobody ever acknowledged that he was indebted to God for his vir-"tue, and certainly with good reason; for we are justly praised on account of "our virtue, and we justly boast of it, which could not be the case, if we had "that gift from God, and not from ourselves."

ed. If the reader desire them, I shall refer him to Mr. Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*, book 1. chap. 3. parag. 9. where he may see it has been customary with not a few nations, to expose their children, bury them alive without scruple, fatten them for the slaughter, kill them and eat them, and dispatch their aged parents: yea some, he will find, have been so absurd, as to expect paradise as a *reward of revenge*, and of *eating abundance of their enemies*. Whether these instances will answer Mr. Locke's purpose, I dispute not now. I design not to make myself a party in that controversy. But I am sure such fatal mistakes, as to what is good and evil, are a pregnant evidence of the insufficiency of nature's light to afford us a complete rule of duty. If they, who were left to it, blundered so shamefully in the clearest cases, how shall we expect direction, as to those that are far more intricate?

6. Be this system never so complete, yet it can never be allowed to be a rule of life to mankind. This I cannot better satisfy myself upon, than by transcribing what the ingenious Mr. Locke has excellently discoursed on this head. "I will suppose there was "a *Stobeus* in those times, who had gathered the *moral sayings* "from all the *sages* of the world. What would this amount to, "towards being a steady rule, a certain transcript of a law, that we "are under? Did the saying of Aristippus, or Confucius, give it "authority? Was Zeno a lawgiver to mankind? If not, what he "or any other philosopher delivered, was but a saying of his. Mankind might hearken to it or reject it as they pleased, or as it "suited their interest, passions, principles, or humours. They "were under no obligation: The opinion of this or that philosopher, was of no authority. And if it were, you must take all he "said under the same character. All his dictates must go for law, "certain and true; or none of them. And then if you will take "the moral sayings of Epicurus (many whereof Seneca quotes "with approbation) for precepts of the law of nature, you must "take all the rest of his doctrine for such too, or else his authority "ceases: So no more is to be received from him, or any of the "sages of old, for parts of the law of nature, as carrying with them "any obligation to be obeyed, but what they prove to be so. But "such a body of ethicks, proved to be the law of nature, from "principles or reason, and reaching all the duties of life, I think nobody will say the world had before our Saviour's time." And I may add, nor to this day has, by the mere light of nature. "It is "not enough," continues he, "that there were up and down scattered sayings of wise men, conformable to right reason. The "law of nature was the law of conveniency too: And it is no wonder these men of parts, and studious of virtue, (who had occasion to think of any particular part of it) should, by meditation, "light on the right, even from the observable conveniency and

"beauty of it, without making out its obligation from the true prin-
"ciples of the law of nature, and foundations of morality." More he adds judiciously to this purpose; but this is enough. And hence it is plain, that such a system of morality would, if collected, at best be only a collection of problems, which every man is left at liberty to canvass, dispute, or reject; nay more, which every man is obliged to examine as to all its parts, in so far as it prescribes rules to him, and not to receive, but upon a discovery of its truth from its proper principles.

7. It is then plain, that every man is left to his own reason to find out his duty by. He is not to receive it upon any other authority than that of reason, if revelation is rejected. He must find out therefore, in every case, what he is to do, and deduce its obligation from the principles of the law of nature. But who sees not, that the most part of men have neither leisure nor capacity for such a work? Men may think duty easy to be discovered now, when Christianity has cleared it up. But Mr. Locke well observes, "That the first knowledge of those truths, which have been disco-
"vered by Christian philosophers, or philosophers since Christi-
"anity prevailed, is owing to revelation; though as soon as they are
"heard and considered, they are found to be agreeable to reason,
"and such as can by no means be contradicted. Every one may
"observe a great many truths which he receives at first from
"others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason, which he
"would have found it hard, and perhaps beyond his strength to
"have discovered himself. Native and original truth, is not so
"easily wrought out of the mine, as we who have it delivered
"ready dug and fashioned into our hands, are apt to imagine. And
"how often at fifty, and three score years old, are thinking men
"told, what they wonder how they could miss thinking of? Which
"yet their own contemplations did not, and possibly never would
"have helped them to. Experience shews, that the knowledge of
"morality, by mere natural light, (how agreeable soever it be to it,)
"makes but a slow progress and little advance in the world:
"Whatever was the cause, it is plain in fact, that human reason,
"unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of mo-
"rality."

8. As it is unquestionably certain, that the most part of mankind are not able, by their own reason, to frame a complete body of morality for themselves, or find out what is their own duty in every particular instance. (I shall not speak of any man's being obliged to discover what belongs to other people's duty, lest our antagonists should suspect I designed to open a door for priests, a set of men and an office which they mortally hate.) I speak only of what is every one's duty in particular. And I say it is evident, that the most part of mankind are unable to find this, which is not to be

done, but by such strains of reasoning, and connexion of consequences, which they have neither leisure to weigh, nor, for want of capacity, education and use, skill to judge of; and as I say, they are unable for this, so I fear this task will be found too hard for the ablest philosophers. Particular duties are so many, and many of them so remote from the first principles, and the connection is so subtle and fine spun, that I fear not to say that it must escape the piercing eyes of the most acute philosophers: and if they engage in pursuit of the discovery, through so many and so subtle consequences, they must either quit the unequal chace, or lose themselves instead of finding truth and duty. And if we allow ourselves to judge of what shall be, by what has been the success of such attempts, I am sure this is more than bare guess.

It is further to be observed, that no tolerable progress could be made herein, were it to be done before advanced years. But it is certain that youth, as well as riper age, is under the *law of nature*, and that that age needs clear discoveries of duty the more, that in it irregular passions and inclinations are more vigorous, and it is exposed to more temptations than any part of a man's life; and besides, it wants the advantages of experience, to fortify it against the dangerous influence of them, which advanced years are attended with. Now it will be to no purpose to me, to find out some years hence what was my duty before, as to obedience; for now the season is over. The law may discover my *sin*, but can never regulate my *practice*, in a period of my life that is past and gone. Every man must have the knowledge of each day's duty in its season. This is not to be had from the light of nature. If we are left at a loss in our younger years, as nature's light will have us, we may be ruined before knowledge come. Much sin must be contracted, and ill habits are like to be very much strengthened before any stop come: yea, they may be so strong, that the foundation of inevitable ruin may be laid.

Finally, knowledge is requisite before acting; at least, in order of nature it is so, and must, at least in order of time, be contemporary. Action gives not always time for long reasoning and weighing such trains of consequences, as are requisite to clear duties from the first principles of nature's light, and enforce their obligation. And therefore man left to it, is in a miserable plight, not much unlike to the case of the Romans, *Dum deliberant Romani capitur Saguntum**: While he is searching for duty, the season is lost; and the discovery, if it comes, arrives too late to be of any use.

It is in vain for any to pretend, that the knowledge of duty is connate to the mind of man. Whatever may be pretended as to a

* "While the Romans were deliberating, Saguntum was taken."

few of the first principles of morality, and it is but a very few of which these can be alledged, yet it is certain, it can never be without impudence extended to the thousandth part of the duties we are bound to in particular cases. General rules may be easy; particular ones are the difficulty, and the application of generals to circumstantiated cases is a hard task. It is but with an ill grace pretended, that these duties are self-evident, and the knowledge of them innate or connate, call it what you please, to the mind of man; which the world has never been agreed about; which wise men, when the fairest occasions offered of thinking on them, could not discern; which philosophers, upon application and attention, cannot make out from the principles of reason. The reason why the knowledge of any truth is said to be innate, is, because, either the mind of man is struck with the evidence of it on its first proposal, and must yield assent, without seeking help from any principles of a clearer evidence; or because its dependence on such principles is so obvious, that the conclusion is so plainly connected with such principles, that it is never sooner spoke of, than its connexion with them, and so its truth appears. Of the first sort few duties can be said to be. And if they were of the last sort, any person of a tolerable capacity would be able to demonstrate them upon attention. Now how far it is otherwise in this case, who sees not?

Upon the whole, I must conclude, that nature's light is not sufficient to give us *such a law* or *rule* as may be a *sure guide* to those who desire to go right, so that they need not lose their way or mistake their duty, if they have a mind to know it, nor be uncertain whether they have done it.

It will not relieve the Deists to pretend, that some of the exceptions above mentioned may be retorted upon Christians, and improven against the scriptures: For nothing but ignorance of the true state of the question can give countenance to this pretence. The scriptures are a rule provided by sovereign grace for fallen man, and by *infinite* wisdom are adjusted to God's great design of recovering man to the praise of his own grace, in such a way as may *stain the pride of all glory*. They are sufficient as an outward mean, and do effectually conduct man to that happiness designed for him, under the influence of the assisting grace provided for him, and in the use of the means of God's appointment. They provide a relief against any unavoidable defects in his obedience, and direct to the proper grounds of his acceptance in it: But men who pretend nature's light is able to guide to happiness, are obliged to shew that it affords us a rule of duty; which of itself, without the help of any supernatural assistance, either as to outward means or inward influences, may be able to lead man to the obedience required; and this obedience must be such, as answers our original obligation, and

upon account of its own worth, is able to support, not only a hope of acceptance but of future, nay eternal rewards. For such as are left to nature's light, can neither pretend to any such outward means, nor inward assistance, nor any such relief against defects in knowledge or practice, as the scriptures do furnish us with. Nature's light lays no other foundation for hopes of acceptance or reward, save only the worth or perfection of the obedience itself. And this, if it is duly considered, not only repels the pretended retortion, but gives additional force to the foregoing argument.

CHAP. VIII.

Proving the Insufficiency of Natural Religion from its Defects as to sufficient Motives for enforcing Obedience.

IT is warmly disputed in the schools, whether *rewards* and *punishments* be not so much of the *essence* of a law, and so included in its notion, that nothing can properly be stiled law which wants them? I design not to make myself a party in those disputes. But this much is certain, that laws and government are relatives; they mutually infer and remove each other. There is no government properly so called, that wants laws, or somewhat that is the measure and standard of its administration. And there are no laws where there is no authority and government to enjoin them.—Whence this plainly results, that obedience, if it does no more, yet it certainly entitles to the protection of the government. And disobedience, not only deprives of any title to that, but lays open to such further severities, as the government shall have power to execute and see meet to use for its own preservation, against violaters of its constitutions. But further, to wave this dispute, the nature of man which proceeds not to actions save upon knowledge, makes this much certain, That whatever he may be supposed to be obliged to in strict duty, yet really in fact, he uses not to pay any great regard to laws which are not enforced by motives or inducements, that may be supposed to work with him, as containing discoveries of such advantages attending obedience, and disadvantages following disobedience, as may powerfully sway him to consult his duty as well as his interest, by yielding obedience. If then, natural religion is found unable to discover those things which ordinarily prevail with man to obey, and carry him over any obstructions which lie in the way, it can never be supposed sufficient to lead man to happiness: For man is not to be driven, but led; he is not to be led blind-folded, but upon rational views of duty and interest. That natural religion is in this respect exceedingly

defective is the design of this discourse to demonstrate. All these motives, which usually have any influence, may, I think, be brought under the following heads. 1. A full view of the authority of the lawgiver and his laws. 2. A prospect of present benefit by obedience. 3. A prospect of future rewards for it. 4. Fear of punishment in case of disobedience. And 5. Examples. Now, as I know no motive which may not easily without stretch be resolved into one of those, so, if I make it appear that nature's light is lame as to each of them, I think I have gone a great way to disprove its sufficiency to happiness. Well, let us essay it.

1. The great inducement to obedience is *a clear discovery of the authority of the lawgiver*, and laws thence resulting. This is not perhaps, properly speaking, a *motive*, as it is oft used: for in very deed this is the formal reason of obedience; a regard whereto gives any action the denomination of obedience, and entitles to the law's protection, and other advantages; yet certain it is, that this should have the principal influence, from the ground just now laid down, and therefore we shall here speak of it. It will prevail far with man to obey the law of nature, if nature's light clearly discovers how much the law-giver deserves that place; how well he is qualified for it; how indisputable his title to the government is, and how far he has interposed his authority; that the stamp of it is on these laws, to which we are urged to be subject; that they bear a plain congruity to his sublime qualifications; that he is concerned to have them obeyed; observes the entertainment they meet with; entertains a respect for the obedient, and resents disobedience. If we are left in the dark, as to all or most of these, it will exceedingly weaken our regard to the law. And that this is plainly the case, is now to be made appear. 1. It goes a great way toward the recommendation of any law to be fully satisfied as to the qualifications of the framer. But how dark is nature's light here? It discovers indeed his power and greatness: But its notions of his wisdom, justice, clemency and goodness are exceedingly darkened, by the seemingly unequal distributions of things here below, the innumerable miseries, under which the world groans, and other things of a like nature; that truly, very few, if left merely to its conduct, would reach any such discoveries of those glorious properties, as would influence any considerable regard to those laws he is supposed to make.

I dispute not now, what may be strictly known and demonstrated of God, by a train of subtle arguments. For I would not be understood so much as to insinuate the want of *objective evidences* of the *wisdom* and *goodness of the Deity*. Our question respects not so much these, as *man's power* of discerning them. It is not absolutely denied, that there are many and pregnant evidences of these attributes in the works of creation and providence; our

question is only, Whether there is such evidence of those perfections, especially in God's moral government of the world, everywhere appearing, as may be able effectually to influence the practice, and affect the mind of man in his present state, notwithstanding of any obstructions arising, either from the inward weakness of his faculties, or the works of God from without, which to the darkened mind of man may have a contrary appearance? And that which I contend is, That such is the state of things, so they go in the world, and so blind are men's eyes, that there is not so near and clear evidence of these things, in what is discernible by the most of men, as may strike strongly, affect powerfully, and have a lively influence to quicken to practice. If our governor is near, if he is daily conversant with us, if we have daily indisputed evidences of his goodness, wisdom, justice, clemency, and other qualifications fitting for government, without any actions that may seem to be capable of a contrary construction, or even of a dubious one, this enforces a regard to his commands. On the contrary, if he is little known, if his way of management is hid from us, if there are instances, which however possibly they may be just, yet have a contrary appearance to us, this weakens regard and quite confounds. And this is plainly the case as to God, with men left to the mere conduct of nature's light, not through any defect on God's part, but through the darkness of the mind of man in his present state; and this is the more considerable, that we use to be more sensible of what evil any is supposed to do us, than of what good we may receive from them. Now since this observation is of use to prevent mistakes, I desire it may be carried along through the rest of our remarks. 2. It works powerfully, and strongly excites to obedience, if the indisputableness of the law-giver's title, and the grounds whereon it leans are clearly known. Now as to God, the grounds of his title to the legislative as well as executive power, are the super-eminent excellency of his nature, rendering him not only fit, but the only fit person for it; his creation of all things, and thence resulting, propriety in them as his creatures, such as his preservation of them in being, his providential care and inspection, and the many benefits he bestows on them. But we have heard already, how dim the discoveries of God's super-eminent excellencies are, which the light of nature affords. As to his creation, it was disputed among the learned and quite overlooked by the vulgar, amongst those who were left to nature's light, as baron Herbert well observes and clears. As to his close influence in their preservation, it could not be noticed or known, where the other was overlooked. His providential care and inspection, which perhaps, as to its power of influencing, would go the greatest length, if it can be proven by the light of nature; yet cannot certainly by it be explained, and truly is so darkened by many obvi-

ous occurrences in the external administration of the world, that past all peradventure, it can never suitably affect men, who have no other discoveries of it, than the light of nature affords. As to God's benefits, though they are many, yet they did not affect so much, because they were conveyed by the intervention of such second causes as did arrest, instead of helping forward the short-sighted minds of men, and detained them in contemplation of the servant who brought the favour, whereas they should have looked further, to him who sent it; so they should have done, but so they did not. Again, some of their most valuable benefits, their virtues, they denied God to be the author of, as we have heard above from Seneca, Cicero and Epictetus. And finally, some of them were inclinable to think, that the benefits were more than countervailed by the evils we labour under. Thus were the minds of men darkened, and so they had continued, if we had been without revelation. 3. It is of much force to influence obedience, if we have a clear and satisfying discovery of his government in those laws; that is, that he who is thus qualified for, and rightfully possessed of the government, has made such laws, and stamped his authority on them. However great ideas we have of his excellency and title to give laws; yet this will have no weight, if we are not clearly satisfied that these are *his* laws. Now how palpably defective nature's light is here, has been fully made out in the last chapter. 4. It will have no small force, if we had a clear knowledge, that these laws are in their matter fully congruous to the qualifications we desire in a law-giver, such as wisdom, goodness, justice, clemency and the like. But as these attributes are either not known or darkly known by the light of nature; so the impress of them on the laws of nature has not been discovered, nor is it discoverable: for I doubt not but it might easily be made appear, that the whole frame of the laws of nature are adapted to the nature of man as innocent, and endued with sufficient power to continue so, which is not the case with him now. And, therefore, how to reconcile these laws to the notions of God and man is a speculation, as of the last consequence, so of the greatest difficulty, which had never been got through, if God had not vouchsafed us *another guide* than nature's light. 5. If the law-giver is certainly known to have a great regard to his laws, and to take careful inspection of the observation of them; this will be a strong inducement to regard them. But here nature's light is no less dark, than as to the rest. The whole face of things in the world seem to have so contrary an aspect, that we could never see clearly through this matter, if, without revelation, we were left to judge of God by the mere light of nature. The abounding of sin, prosperity of sinners, sufferings of the best, and the like, led some to deny God's providence and gov-

ernment entirely; others of the better sort doubted of it, as Claudian elegantly represents his own case, lib. 1. *contra Rufinum.*

Sæpe mihi dubiam traxit sententia mentem,
Curarent superi terras, an ullus inesset
Rector & incerto fluerent mortalia casu.
Nam cum dispositi quæsissem fœdera mundi,
Præscriptosque mari fines, annisque meatus,
Et lucis, notisque vices: Tunc omnia rebar
Consilio firmata Dei——————
Sed cum res hominum tanta caligine volvi
Adspicerem, lætosque diu florere nocentes,
Vexarique pios: Rursus labefacta cadebat
Religio caussæque viam non sponte sequebar
Alterius, vacuo quæ currere semina motu
Affirmat magnumque novas per inane figuras
Fortuna, non arte regi: quæ numina sensu
Ambiguo vel nulla putat, vel nescia nostri.*

I know that Claudian got over this by *Rufinus's* death, but such providences have not always the like issue, and I only adduce his words as a lively representation of the strait. Yea, to so great a height came these doubts, that it is to be feared that many were carried to the worst side. It is certain, the best of them were so confounded with those occurrences, that they could not spare reflections full of blasphemy upon Providence. The famed Cato's last words may scarcely be excused for this crime. Finally, it is certain, that there was so much darkness about this matter, that none of them all paid a due regard to God.

I shall now leave this head, after I have observed one or two things; and the first of them is, That however some of these truths above mentioned may possibly be made out by a train of subtle arguments; yet such arguments, however they may draw an assent from a thinking man, not only transcend the capacity of the vulgar, but fail of exciting and affecting even the most philosophical heads. For to draw forth our active powers into action, the inducements must shine with a light, that may warm the mind as it were, not only dissipating doubts about the reality of what it observed, but also

* "I had often my mind distracted with doubt, whether the gods took care of the world, or whether there was no governor in it, and the affairs of mortals fluctuated under uncertain chance. For when I had enquired into the laws of the world, as disposed into order, and the bounds that are prescribed to the sea, and the course of the year and the succession of day and night, then I thought that these things were established by the wisdom of God. But again, when I saw that the affairs of men were involved in so great darkness, that the wicked flourished in joy for a long time, and that the godly were harrassed; Religion being weakened, expired, and I against my will followed the tract of another opinion, which supposed that the seeds of things have a blind motion, and that new forms of things are directed through an immense void, by chance, and not by art, and which supposes that the deities have either an ambiguous sense or none at all, and that they know nothing of us."

shewing its excellency. Upon this occasion I may not impertinently apply to the philosophers, what Plautus says of comic poets:

> Spectavi ego pridem comicos ad istum modum
> Sapienter dicta dicere, atque illis plaudier
> Cum illos sapientes mores monstrabant populo:
> Sed cum inde suum quisque ibant diversi domum,
> Nullus erat illo pasto, ut illi jusserunt.*

"I have often seen, that after the comic poets have said good "things, and that they have been applauded for them while they "taught good manners to the people, as soon as they were got "home, no body was the better for their advice." The other thing I observe is, that any defect as to the knowledge of the law-giver is so much the more considerable than any other, that a regard to the law-giver is that which gives the formality of obedience to any action, and therefore the less knowledge there is of him, the less of obedience, properly so called, there will be. Thus far we have cleared how little nature's light can do for enforcing obedience from the discoveries it makes of the law-giver.

2. A second head of motives to duty is *present advantage*.—Now if nature's light is able to prove, that obedience to the law of nature is like to turn to our present advantage, either as to profit or pleasure, this would be of weight: But it is needless to insist on this head; for who sees not, that there is but little to be said as to many duties here? Are they not to cross our present inclinations? And for any thing that nature's light can discover, diametrically opposite to our present interest and honor; I mean according to the notions generally entertained of those things in the world? So it is but little that it can say upon this head. How often are we so situated, that in appearance nothing stands in our way to pleasure, honor or profit, but only the command? It were easy to enlarge on this head; but since it will not be readily controverted I wave it. And indeed it were of no consideration, if present losses were otherwise compensated by future advantages.

3. If nature's light can give a full view of *future rewards*, then this will compensate present disadvantages, and be a strong inducement to obedience. But the discovery, if it is of any use, must be clear and lively, that it may affect and excite, as has been above observed. Well, what can nature's light do here? Very little, as has been above fully demonstrated, when we discoursed of the *chief end*. It remains only now that we observe, that evils and disadvantages discouraging from duty are present, sensible, great, and so affect strongly: wherefore, if future rewards have

* Le Clerk Parrhosiana, page 52.

not somewhat to balance these, they cannot have much influence. Now, it has been made sufficiently evident, that all which nature's light has to put in the balance, to encourage the mind to go on in duty, against present, sensible, certain and great discouragements, is at most, but a dark, conjectural discovery of rewards, or rather suspicion about them, after time, without telling us what they are, or wherein they do consist. Will this ever prevail with men to obey? No, it cannot. The prospect of future rewards was not that which prevailed with the most moral amongst the Heathens of old. Their knowledge of these things, if they had any, was of little or no use or influence to them, as their excitement to virtue.

4. Nature's light is no less defective as to the discovery of *punishments:* For however the forebodings of guilty consciences, a dark tradition handed down from generation to generation, and some exemplary instances of divine severity, have kept some impressions of punishments on the minds of many in all ages; yet it is well known, that those things were ridiculed by most of the philosophers; the poets' fictions made them contemptible, and the daily instances of impunity of sinners here, weakened the impressions. Besides, evils that follow duty, and losses sustained, are sensible, present, certain, known, and so affect strongly, and therefore are not to be balanced by punishments, which are not, or rather, at least, are rarely executed in time, and whereof there is little distinct evidence after time. For be it granted, that the justice and holiness of God render it incredible that so many transgressors as escape unpunished here, should get off so; yet certain it is, that nature's light can no way inform what punishment shall be inflicted.

5. Nature's light can never point us to examples which may have any influence. There are but few of those who wanted revelation, even of the philosophers, who were not tainted with gross vices. We have strange stories told of a *Socrates;* and yet after all, he was but a sorry example of virtue. He is frequently by Plato introduced swearing. He is known to have basely complied with the way of worship followed by his own country, which was the more impious, that it is to be supposed to be against the persuasion of his conscience; yea, we find him with his last breath, ordering his friend to sacrifice the cock he had vowed to Esculapius. M. Dacier's apology for him is perfectly impertinent. He is accused of impure amours with Alcibiades, and of prostituting his wife's chastity for gain. It is evident that in the whole of his conduct, he shews but little regard to God.—Such are the examples we are to expect here. We must give full as bad account of the *famed Seneca,* were it necessary to insist on this head, not to mention others of less consideration.

Now to conclude, how shall we by nature's light be prevailed on to obey, while it gives so unsatisfying discoveries of the law and law-giver? Can shew so little of present or future advantage by obedience, or disadvantage by disobedience? Nor can it offer any examples that are worth following.

It is certain that the experience of the world justifies this account. What means it, that instances of any thing like virtue are so rare where revelation obtains not? Sure it must say one of two, if not both; that either nature's light presents no inducements sufficient to influence *practice*, or that man is *dreadfully corrupt*. The Deists may choose which, or both, and let them avoid the consequences if they can.

It had been easy to have said a great deal more on this head. The subject would have admitted of considerable enlargement; but this my design will not allow. I intend to keep close to the argument, and run out no further than is of necessity for clearing the force of that. And where the case is plain, as I take it to be here, I content myself with touching at the heads which clear the truth under debate.

CHAP. IX.

Shewing the Importance of knowing the Origin of Sin to the World, and the Defectiveness of Nature's Light as to this.

IT is not more clear that the Sun shines, than that the *whole world lies in wickedness*. The creation groans under the weight of this unwieldy load, which lies so heavy upon it, that it is the wonder of all who have any right notions of the justice or holiness of God, that it is not sunk into nothing, or exquisite misery before now. The Heathens made bitter complaints of it. And indeed if their complaints had been left upon themselves, and had not been turned into accusations of the holy God, none could have wondered at them, or condemned them. For it is manifest to any one who will not stop his ears, put out his eyes, stifle his conscience, forswear and abandon his reason, that *the world is full of sin*; what nation or place is free of idolatries, blasphemies, the raging of pride, revenge, perjuries, rapes, adulteries, thefts, robberies, murders, and other abominable evils innumerable? And who sees not, that all these are the effects of strong, prevailing, universal and contagious corruptions and depraved inclinations; from a share of which, no man can justly pretend himself free? And if he should, any one who strictly observes his way, may easily implead him, either of gross ignorance or disingenuity.

To know how things came to this pass with the world, and trace this evil to its fountain, is a business of great importance to religion: Yea, of so much moment is it, that one can scarcely tell how any thing like religion is to be maintained in the world, without some competent knowledge of it.

1. If this is not known, we can never make any right estimate of the *evil of sin*. If men were by their original constitution, without their own fault, made of so wicked or infirm a nature, as that either they were inclined to it, or unable to resist temptations, amongst the throng of which they were placed, it is impossible for them to look upon sin as so detestable an evil as really it is; or blame themselves so much for it, as yet they are bound to do. If it is quite otherwise, and man was originally upright, and fell not into this case, but by a fault justly chargeable on him, it is certain, that quite other apprehensions of sin should be maintained. Now such as men's apprehensions are about the evil of sin, such will their care be to avoid it, prevent it, or get it removed. And who sees not, that the whole of religion is easily reduced to these things?

2. If the origin of sin is not understood, man can never understand what he is obliged to in the way of duty. If we derive this weakness, wickedness and depraved inclination from our first constitution, we can never look on ourselves as obliged to such an obedience, as the rectitude, holiness, and purity of the divine nature, seems to render necessary. And if we are uncertain as to this, we shall never know how far our duty extends. And if we know not what is required of us, how can we do it? To say we are bound to obey as far as we can, is to speak nonsense, and what no way satisfies the difficulty: For this leaves us to judge of our own power, opens a door to man to interpret the law as he pleases, and charges God with such folly in the frame of the law, as we dare scarcely charge on any human law-giver.

3. Without the knowledge of the origin of sin, we can never know what measures to take, in subduing our corrupt inclinations. If we know not of what nature they are, how they come to be interwoven with our frame, and so much of a piece with ourselves, we shall not know where to begin attempts for reformation, or if it be practicable to eradicate them. And yet this must be done, otherwise we cannot with any shew of reason project happiness. But the rise of corruption being hid, we shall neither know what it is to be removed or where to begin our work, nor how far success to attempts of this kind may reasonably be hoped for. And of how destructive consequence this is to all religion, is easily seen.

4. If the *origin of sin* is not known, we will be at a loss what thoughts to entertain of God's *holiness*, *justice* and *goodness*, yea

and his *wisdom* too. If our natures were originally burdened with those corrupt inclinations so twisted in with them, as now we find them; or if we were so infirm, as not to be able to resist a throng of temptations, among which we were placed, we will scarcely be able to entertain such a high regard for God's holiness, goodness and wisdom in our make, or of his justice in dealing so by us.—And if we suppose otherwise, we will still be confounded by our darkness about any other way we can possibly think of, whereby things were brought to this pass, and mankind so universally precipitated into so miserable a case.

5. If the *origin of evil* is not known, we shall never be able to judge what *estimate* God will make of sin, whether he will look on it as *so evil* as to demerit any deep resentment, or otherwise.

6. Hereon it follows, that the whole state of our affairs with God, will be quite darkened and become unintelligible. We shall not know whether he shall animadvert so heavily on us for our sins, as to ruin us, or so slightly pass over them, as not to call us to an account. If the latter is supposed, *obedience is ruined*; considering what man's inclinations and temptations are: who will obey, if no ruin or hurt is to be feared by sin? If the former is supposed, our *hope is ruined*. We shall not know what value God will put on our obedience, if this is not known; whether he will not reject it for the sinful defects cleaving to it. Nor shall we know whether he will pardon us, or upon what terms, if we know not what thoughts he has of sin. And this we know not, nor can we possibly understand, unless we know how it came, and came to be so twisted in with our natures.

Finally, hereon depends any tolerable account of the *equity of God's proceedings*, at least of his goodness in dealing so with the world, subjecting it to such a train of miseries. If any thing of sin is chargeable justly upon man's make and first constitution, it will be much to clear his justice, but harder to acquit his goodness in plaguing the world so. If otherwise, it will be easy to justify God: but how then were men brought to this case?

Thus we have shortly hinted at those grounds that clear the importance of the case. An enlargement on them would have made the dullest understand, that without some satisfying account of the origin of evil, all religion is left loose. The judicious will easily see it. It now remains that we make appear the *insufficiency of nature's light*. To clear this point, it is evident if we consider,

1. That most of the wise men of the world have passed over this in silence, as a speculation too hard and high. The effects of it were so sensible, that they could not but notice them, as the Egyptians did the overflowing of their Nile. But when they would have traced these streams up to their source, they were forced to quit it as an unequal chace. The reason whereof is ingeniously,

as well as solidly given by the judicious Dr. Stillingfleet: "The "reason was, says he, as corruption increased in the world, so the "means of instruction and knowledge decayed; and so as the phe- "nomena grew greater, the reason of them was less understood: "The knowledge of the history of the first ages of the world, "through which they could alone come to the full understanding of "the true cause of evil, insensibly decaying in the several nations; "insomuch that those who are not at all acquainted with that his- "tory of the world, which was preserved in sacred records among "the Jews, had nothing but their own uncertain conjectures to go "by, and some kind of obscure traditions, which were preserved "among them, which while they sought to rectify by their inter- "pretations, they made them more obscure and false than they "found them."*

2. Others who would needs appear more learned, but were really less wise, offered accounts, or pretended to say somewhat, rather to hide their own ignorance, than explain what they spoke of. So obscure are they, that nothing can be concluded from what they say, but that they were ignorant, and yet so disengenuous and proud that they would not own it. Among this sort Plato is reckoned, and with him Pythagoras, who tell us, "that the princi- "ple of good is unity, finity, quiescent, streight, even number, "square, right and splendid; the principle of evil, binary, infinite, "crooked, uneven, long of one side, unequal, wrong, obscure."† Plutarch as is noted by Dr. Stillingfleet, says, that the opinion of Plato is very obscure, it being his purpose to conceal it; but he saith in his old age, in his book *de Legibus*, ὃ δὴ αἰνιγμὸν ἄνευ συμβολῆς without any riddle and allegory, he asserts the world to be moved by more than *one principle*, by two at the least; the one of a *good and benign nature*, the other *contrary* to it, both in its nature and operations τὴν μὲν ἀγαθὴν εἶναι, τὴν δὲ ἐναντίαν ταύτῃ ᾗ τῶν ἐναντίων δημιουργεῖ.

3. Another, and perhaps the greater part, did plainly give the most absurd and ridiculous, not to say blasphemous accounts of this matter. Some pretending all the vitiosity inherent in matter, which they supposed not created. The folly as well as wickedness of this opinion, is well laid open by the judicious person last quoted. This was what Plato aimed at, as Dr. Stillingfleet clears from Numenius, a famous Syrian Platonic philosopher, who is thought to have lived in the second century, who giving an account of Pythagoras and Plato's opinions, says, Pythagoras *ait*, "*Existente providentia, mala quoque necessario substitisse propter- "ea quod sylva sit & eadem sit malitia prædita: Platonemque*

* Origines sacræ, lib. 3. cap. 3. sect. 8.
† Origines, sacræ, ibid. sect. 11.

" *idem Numenius laudat, quod duas mundi animas autumnet; un-*
" *am beneficentissimam; malignam alteram scil. Sylvam. Igi-*
" *tur juxta Platonem mundo bona sua Dei, tanquam patris lib-*
" *eralitate collata sunt; mala vero matris sylvæ vitio coho-*
" *rescunt.*"* The plain case is, they thought God and matter eternally co-existent, and that vitiosity was inherent in matter, and that God could not mend it. To this purpose Maximus Tyrius, a Platonic philosopher, who lived in the second century, speaks, " That all the evils that are in the world, are not the works of art, " but the affections of matter."† Seneca says, " *Non potest ar-*
" *tifex mutare materiam.*"‡ This way the Stoicks went.—Though they who have studied them, pretend that there was some difference betwixt Plato's opinion and theirs. They who would desire a more full account both of these opinions, and the absurdity and impiety of them, may have it from Dr. Stillingfleet, but a great many of the philosophers plainly maintained two antigods, the one good and the other evil. The Persians had their Oromasdes, to whom they ascribed all the good, and Arimanius, on whom they fathered all their evils. How many run this way, any one may learn from Plutarch's discourse of Isis and Osiris, and judge whether he himself was not of the same mind. What was it that drove those great men on such wild conceits, which are so absurd that they are not worth confuting? Nothing else but their darkness about the rise of sin. And how dismal were the consequences of those notions and of this darkness? What else drove so great a part of the world to that madness, to worship even the principle of evil? Was it not this, that they entertained perverse notions about the origin of evils, both of sin and punishment?

4. Not to insist on those absurd opinions, the latter accounts we have of this matter, by persons who reject the scriptures, after they have taken all the help from them they think meet though they are more polished, are not one whit more satisfactory. For clearing this we shall offer you the most considerable of this sort that have occurred to us. We shall begin with Simplicius a Phrygian philosopher who lived in the fifth century, and was a great opposer of the scriptures. He in his commentary upon the 34th chapter of

* " Although that there is a Providence, evils necessarily exist in the " world, because matter exists in it, which is naturally the cause of evil.—" And Numenius commends Plato who thought that there were two souls of " the world, the one most beneficent, and the other, viz. matter, malicious. " Therefore according to Plato, the good things that are in the world, are " conferred on it as it were by the liberality of its father, but the bad things " that are in it, originate from the vitiosity of matter, which is its mother."

† Max. Ter. Ser. 25.

‡ Seneca de Provid. " The workman cannot change the nature of the mat-" ter on which he works,"

Epictetus, speaks thus: "The soul of man is *nexus utriusque* "*mundi*, in the middle between those more excellent beings, "which remain above (which he had taught to be incapable of "sin) with which it partakes in the sublimity of its nature and "understanding, and those inferior terrestrial beings, with which "it communicates through the vital union which it hath with the "body, and by reason of that freedom and indifferency which it "hath, it is sometimes assimilated to the one, sometimes to the "other of those extremes. So that while it approacheth to the "nature of the superior beings, it keeps itself free from evil; "but because of its freedom, it may sometimes sink down into "those lower things, and so he calls the cause of evil in the soul, "its voluntary descent into this lower world, and immersing itself "in the feculency of terrestrial matter," much more he adds; but it all comes to this, "That because of the freedom of the will "of man, nothing else can be said to be the author of evil, but "the soul."* We have likewise an account from the Oracles of Reason much to the same purpose. A. W. a deist in a letter to Sir Charles Blount, answering an objection of Sir Charles Wolseley, against the sufficiency of natural religion, gives this account: "This generally acknowledged lapse of nature, that it came, may "be discovered by natural light; how it came, is reasonable to "conclude without revelation, namely, by a deviation from the "right rule of reason implanted in us; how he came to deviate "from this rule, or lapse, proceeds from the nature of goodness, "originally given us by our Creator, which reason tells us to be "an arbitrary state of goodness only; therefore not a necessary "goodness to which our natures were constrained, In short our "fall proceeds from our not being able to reason rightly on every "thing we act, and with such beings we were created: For all "our actions are designed by us to some good which may arise "to us; but we do not always distinguish rightly of that good: "we often mistake *bonum apparens* for the *bonum reale*. *De-* "*cipimur specie recti*. The *bonum jucundum* for want of right "reasoning, is preferred to the *bonum honestum*; and the *bonum* "*vicinum*, though it be less in itself, often carries it before the "*bonum remotum*, which is greater in its own nature. No man "ever held that we could *appetere malum qua malum*;† and "therefore I will not grant him a total lapse in our natures from "God. For we see many born with virtuous inclinations; and "though all men at sometimes err, even the best, in their actions, "it only shews that we were not created to a necessitated good-

* Comment. in Epict. Cap. 34.

† "An apparent good for a real good.—We are deceived by the appearance "of rectitude—A pleasing good is preferred to an honorable good, and a near "to a distant one, but we cannot desire evil as evil."

" ness. It is enough to prove no fatal lapse, that many are prov-
" ed, through the course of their lives, more prone to do good
" than evil, and that all men do evil, only for want of right rea-
" soning; because the will necessarily follows the last dictate of
" the understanding."† The next and last whom we shall men-
tion, is the learned Herbert, whom the rest do but copy after.—
Thus then he accounts for it: "*Quod ad malum culpæ spectat,*
" *hoc quidem non aliunde provenire, quem ab arbitrio illo omni-*
" *bus insito, ingenitoque, quod tanquam bonum eximium Deus*
" *optimus maximus nobis largitus est; ex quo etiam a belluis*
" *magis quam ipso intellectu distinguimur: quum tamen ades*
" *ancipitis sit naturæ, ut in utramque partem flecti possit sit ut*
" *in malum sæpe propendeat & dilabatur; caterum per se est be-*
" *neficium plane divinum, ejusque amplitudinis & pvæstantiæ, ut*
" *citra illud, neque boni esse possemus: ecquis enim boni ali-*
" *quid efficere dicitur, nisi quando in adversam partem datur op-*
" *tio? Hinc igitur malum culpæ accidere, quod nobilissima*
" *animæ facultas, in nequiorem sua sponte partem, nulloque co-*
" *gente traducatur detorqueaturque.**

These three accounts, in several respects, run the same way. It were easy however to set them by the ears in some considerable particulars, and perhaps to shew the inconsistency of the several authors with themselves, on these heads: but this is not my design to spend time on things, whereby truth will not gain much; as, perhaps, they contain the sum of what reason can say on the head, so we shall now show how very far they are from satisfying in the case. The substance of them may be reduced to these three propositions:

1. That Man's body sways the soul, to which it is joined, to things suitabfe to itself, which are evil. This Simplicius more than insinuates.

2. That as reason is the guide of the will, which necessarily follows its last dictate; so the will's inclination to evil flows from our not being able to reason rightly. This the Oracles of Reason give plainly as a response in the words now quoted.

† Oracles of Reason, pag. 197.

* De Religione Gentilium, Cap. 13. pag. 164.—" With regard to the evil
" of sin, this arises from no other source than our natural freedom of will,
" which God the best and greatest has bestowed on us as a distinguished
" blessing, and by which we are distinguished from the brutes even more
" than by reason itself. But as this blessing is of so ambiguous a kind, that
" it may be turned either way, it happens that it often inclines to evil and
" goes astray. Yet, in itself it is certainly a divine blessing, and of such an
" extent and excellency, that without it we could not be good. For who is
" ever paid to do good, unless when he had it in his choice to act in a differ-
" ent manner? The evil of sin therefore proceeds from hence, that the most
" noble faculty of the soul, of its own accord, and without any one forcing
" it, is drawn away and turned to the wrong side."

3. The will is *ancipitis naturæ*,‡ perfectly indifferent, equally capable of, and swayed to evil and good. This all the three concur in. It is like a nice balance which stands even, but is easily swayed to either side.

But now it is easy to multiply difficulties against this account, and show how it no way clears, but rather involves the matter more. And,

1. I would desire to know whether that inferior part, the body, or terrestrial part of man, call it which you will, sways to any thing, not suited to its original frame and perfection, or not? If it aims at nothing, bends or inclines to nothing, but what is perfective of itself, I desire to know how that can be faulty? How can this body be made a part of a composition, wherein it is faulty for it to aim at what is truly perfective of its nature? How can it be criminal for the soul to aim at ennobling and satisfying the capacities of that, which is so nearly united to itself? How is it consistent with the wisdom of God, to unite two beings, the one whereof cannot reach its own perfection without hurt to the other? If it is said, that it inclines to what contributes not to its own perfection; then I desire to know how it came to be so depraved as to have a tendency to its own detriment? How was it consistent with the wisdom of God to make it so? How was it consistent with the goodness of God to associate it when so made, with another more noble being to which it must prove a burden; yea, which must sway to that, which proves the ruin of the whole composition? And how can man be blamed for doing that, to which his nature inevitably must carry him? For if he is thus compounded, his body, earthly part, or lower faculties sway to evil; his will is equally inclinable to both; and, in this case, how can the composition be otherwise, than depraved? For my part I see not how it could be otherwise; or how God can justly punish it for being so, upon the supposition laid down.

2. If it be asserted that we are not, by our original constitution able to reason rightly, in what concerns our own duty, as we have heard from the Oracles of Reason; then I desire to know if we are not necessitated by our very make and constitution to err? If we are to believe, what the same Oracle utters, that the will must follow necessarily the understanding; then I desire to know, if we are not necessitated to sin? If things are thus and thus, we must either believe them to be, or believe that this Oracle gives a false response; then I desire to know, how God could make us necessarily evil? How can he punish us for it? Can this be reconciled with the rest of this doctrine, about the arbitrary state of man's goodness? I might ask not a few other queries, but perhaps these will suffice.

‡ Of a doubtful nature.

3. If the will be, in its own nature, perfectly free and indifferent, then I desire to know, whether there is any thing in that composition, whereof it is a part, or to which it is joined, or any thing in the circumstances wherein man is placed, swaying it to the worst side? If there is any thing either in man's constitution or circumstances, swaying him wrong; then I desire to know, is there any thing to balance them? Whether there is or is not any thing to keep him even? I would desire to know how any thing came to be in his constitution, to sway him wrong? If there is any thing to balance these inducements to sin, or inclinations, then man is perfectly indifferent still; and about this we shall speak anon. If there is a will, equally capable of good and evil, and man has somewhat in his constitution or circumstances, at least swaying him to evil, then I desire to know how it was possible for him to evite it? If he has nothing determining him more to evil than to good, or if any thing that inclines to evil is balanced, by other things of no less force determining and swaying him to good, then many things may be enquired: how comes it to pass, that though man is equally inclinable to good or evil, that almost all men choose evil? Yea, I need not put an almost to it. It is a strange thing to suppose all men equally disposed to good or evil, and yet none choose the good.

4. I do not know how this notion of man's liberty, which is easily granted to be in itself, if the notion of it is rightly stated, a perfection, will take with considerate men, that it consists in a perfect indifferency to good or evil; for if this is a necessary perfection of the rational nature, without which it cannot be called good, as Herbert clearly asserts, in his words above quoted; then I ask, what shall become of those natures unalterably good, of which Simplicius talks? Is it absurd to suppose, that there may be such? Are they, if they be, less perfect, because incapable of that which debases and depraves them? Is God good, who has beyond dispute no such liberty as this? Is an indifferency to commit sin or not to sin, a great perfection? If it be, is it greater than not to be capable of sinning? They may embrace this notion of liberty who will, and fancy themselves perfect, I shall not for this, reckon them so.

5. This account of man as equally inclined to good or evil, is either an account of man's case as he now is, or as at first made: If man is now otherwise, to wit, inclined more to evil than to good, how came he to be so? This is the difficulty we desire to be satisfied about. If this be the case he was made in, and still continues in, then, I say, it is utterly false, and contradictory to the ears, eyes and conscience of all the world. Who sees not that man is plainly, strongly, and I may add universally, inclined to evil? The wiser heathens have owned it. And it is plainly

made out against the most impudent denier. Hieroclis' words, as I find them translated by an excellent person, are memorable to this purpose. "Man, says he, is of his own motion, inclined "to follow the evil and leave the good. There is a certain strife "bred in his affections; he hath a free will which he abuseth, "binding himself wholly to encounter the laws of God. And "this freedom itself is nothing else, but a willingness to admit "that which is not good, rather than otherwise."* This is a true state of the matter from a heathen.

6. The supposition of man's being made perfectly indifferent is injurious to God, who cannot be supposed, without reflection on him, to have put man in such a case. The least that can be said, preserving the honor due to the divine excellencies, is that God gave a law to man, suitable to the rectitude of his own nature and to man's happiness and perfection; that he endued him with an ability to know this law, the obligations he lay under to obey it, and the inducements that might have fortified him in his obedience against the force of any temptation which he might meet with. If this be not asserted, it will not be possible to keep God from blame, which all that own him, are concerned to take care of: for how could he bind man to obey a law, which he did not make known to him, or at least gave him a power to know? If he laid him open to temptations, and made him incapable of discovering what might antidote their force, if he would use it, what shall we think of his goodness? Further, we must own that the will of man was made inclinable, though not immutably so, to its own perfection: how else was it worthy of its author? Finally, we must own that man had no affection or inclination in him, that was really contradictory to that law which he was subjected to, and which tended to his happiness and perfection. If this is denied, then I ask, were not these inclinations sinful? Was that being worthy of God, that had no tendency to its own perfection? But on the contrary, what was inclinable to its own ruin?

7. This being the least, that can without manifest reproach to the wisdom, goodness and justice of the Creator, be supposed in favor of man's original constitution; I desire to know, is this the case still or is it not? If it is not, then how came it to be otherwise? How comes man really to be worse now, than at first? How is this consistent with the deist's principles, that there is no lapse? If it be asserted, we are in the same state still, how then comes all the world to be full of wickedness? How is this reconcileable with the experiences and consciences of men, that assured them of the contrary?

8. If it be thought enough to resolve all this, as to actual failings,

* Hieroclis Carmin. Aur. Transl. Reas. of Script. Belief, pag. 146.

into the choice of man; yet what shall we say as to that darkness as to duty, which we heard the Deists confessing, in their Oracles of Reason? How came that inability to reason rightly, which we have before demonstrated man under, and which our adversaries will own! Again, how come we to have vicious inclinations so strongly rooted in our natures! Strong they are; for they trample upon our light, the penalties of laws divine and human; yea and the smartings of our own conscience. The drunkard and unclean person finds his health ruined, and yet in spite of all this, his inclination makes him run on in the vice that has ruined him: and the like is evident in other cases innumerable. Deeply rooted they are: They are some way twisted in with the constitutions of our body, and no less fixed in our souls. So fixèd they are, that, though our own reason condemns them, it cannot remove them. Though sometimes fear restrains them as to the outward acts; yet it cannot eradicate the inclination. Instruction and all human endeavors cannot do it. The famed Seneca that understood so much, who undertook to teach others, and perhaps has spoken and writ better than most of the Heathens; yet by all his knowledge and all his endeavors, owns this corruption so deeply rooted in himself, that he expected not to get rid of it. *Non perveni ad sanitatem, ne perveniam quidem: delinimentia magis quam remedia podagræ meæ compono contentus si rarius accedat, & si minus terminatur.**

9. Not only so, but further, how come these inclinations to be born with us? To grow up with us? That they are so, is evident. We no sooner begin to act than to act perversely. We no sooner shew any inclinations, than we shew that our inclinations are evil. Yea, among Christians, where there are many virtuous persons, who give the best example, the best instruction, and use the best discipline for the education of their children in virtue, yet we see the children discover inclinations so strong, as are not to be restrained by all these endeavors, much less eradicated: and so early are they there, that they cannot be prevented by the most timeous care.

10. It will not help the matter to tell us, that there are some born with virtuous inclinations. For 1. If all are not so, the difficulty remains. How came these to be born otherwise, of whom we have been speaking! How came their frame to be different from, nay, and worse than that of others! Are they under the same law? If so, why have they more impediments, and less power of obedience? 2. We would be glad to see the persons condescended on, that are void of vicious inclinations, that we might ask them some questions. You say you are born with virtuous inclinations. Well, but have you no ill inclinations? If you are no drunkard, adulterer,

* "I am not come to a sound state, nor shall I ever arrive at it. I am composing palliatives rather than remedies for my gout, being content if it attacks me more seldom, and proves less violent."

&c. yet have you no inclination to pride, prodigality, neglect of God, covetousness, or somewhat like? I fear the man that can answer plainly in the negative here, will not be easily found. And till we see him, we deny there is any such. 3. To confirm this, several persons, whom the world has looked on as virtuously inclined from their infancy, have, when seriously acquainted with Christianity, owned that they were as wickedly inclined as others; only by the help of their constitution, they were not so much prompted to those evils, which are most observed and condemned in the world. And this account has been given by persons of judgment, whose capacity, nor ingenuity cannot reasonably be questioned. Finally, the ground whereon A. W. pronounces against an universal lapse, viz. That we cannot *appetere malum qua malum*,* is ridiculous: For this is a thing perfectly inconsistent, not only with the due exercise, but the very nature of our rational faculties: And if notwithstanding this impossibility of any man's desiring evil as evil, so many are deeply corrupted, no imaginable reason can be assigned, why all men may not be so, without supposing that we can *appetere malum qua malum*.

To conclude then, it is upon the whole evident, that reason can never trace this matter to its proper source. Our consciences condemn us indeed, and so acquit the Deity. But without revelation we can never understand upon what grounds we are condemned by ourselves, nor how the Deity is to be justified; and so this sentence of our consciences involves the matter more, and increases the difficulty. It is not from any distinct view of the particular way how we come to be guilty, and how God comes to be free of blame, that conscience is led to this sentence. And therefore, how to come to any satisfaction about the matter, that may liberate us from the inconveniences above mentioned, which are really subversive of all religion, and can reasonably be supposed available to us, reason can never satisfy us.

Since these gentlemen, with whom we have to do, find it their interest to deny any lapse, I shall, to what has been said, add a short, but judicious and solid confirmation of this, from a person of a more than ordinary reach, I mean Dr. How: who, after he has quoted many testimonies from Heathen authors, proving this lapse, reasons for it, and confirms it further from arguments not easily to be answered: His words run thus, "If we consider, can it be so "much as imaginable to us, that the present state of man is his "primitive state, or that he is now such as he was at first made? "For neither is it conceivable, that the blessed God should have "made a creature with an aversion to the only important ends, "whereof it is naturally capable: Or particularly that he created

* Desire evil as evil.

" man, with a disaffection to himself; or, that ever he at first, de-
" signed a being of so high excellency, as the spirit of man to
" trudge so meanly, and be so basely servile to terrene inclinations;
" or, since there are manifestly powers in him, of a superior and
" inferior sort and order, the meaner should have been by original
" institution framed to command; and the more noble and excel-
" lent, only to obey and serve; as every one that observes, may
" see the common case with man is.

" And how far he is swerved from what he was, is easily con-
" jecturable by comparing him with the measures, which shew
" what he should be. For it cannot be conceived for what end
" laws were ever given him; if at least we allow them not to be
" the measures of his primitive capacity, or deny him ever to
" have been in a possibility to obey. Could they be intended for
" his government if conformity to them were against or above his
" nature? Or were they only for his condemnation? Or for what,
" if he was never capable of obeying them? How inconsistent were
" it with the goodness of the blessed God, that the condemnation
" of his creatures should be the first design of his giving them
" laws! And with his justice, to make his laws the rule of punish-
" ment, to whom they could never be the rule of obedience and
" duty! Or with his wisdom, to frame a system and body of laws,
" that should never serve for either purpose! And so be upon the
" whole useful for nothing. The common reason of mankind
" teacheth us to estimate the wisdom and equity of law-givers, by
" the suitableness of their constitutions to the genius and temper
" of the people for whom they are made; and we commonly
" reckon nothing can more slur and expose a government, than the
" imposing of constitutions, most probably impracticable, and
" which are never likely to obtain. How much more incongruous
" must it be esteemed to enjoin such as never possibly could!
" Prudent legislators, and studious of the common good, would be
" shy to impose upon men, under their power, against their ge-
" nius and common usages, neither easily alterable, nor to any ad-
" vantage; much more absurd were it, with great solemnity, and
" weighty sanctions, to enact statutes for brute creatures: and
" wherein were it more to purpose, to prescribe unto men strict
" rules of piety and virtue, than to beasts or trees, if the former
" had not been capable of observing them, as the latter were not."*
I believe the Deists will not easily overthrow this nervous dis-
course.

* Dr. How's Living Temple, Part 2, page 121, 122.

CHAP. X.

Proving Nature's Light unable to discover the Means of obtaining Pardon of Sin, or to shew that it is attainable.

THAT *all have sinned* is sufficiently clear from the foregoing discourse. That it is of importance to understand the *rise* of sin, and that nature's light is unable to trace its original, has been likewise evinced. But all this were indeed of less consideration, if nature's light could assure us of pardon, or direct as to the means whereby it may be obtained. But here it is no less defective, than as to the former. That we are all guilty of sin even the deists do acknowledge; the Oracles of Reason own that all men at sometimes err, even the best, in their actions. And the evidence of it is such, that none can get over the truth, if he is not plainly resolved to deny what is most evident. Now this being the case, that we have all transgressed, it is of the highest importance to know whether God will pardon us, or upon what terms he will do it? If he punish us, what a case are we in? How can they who fear punishment expect rewards! But because this is a difficulty of no small importance, and the Deists, since they see they cannot clear it, make their business to obscure the importance of the case, and render it more involved; we shall, therefore,

1. State the case, and clear the importance of it.
2. Discover the weakness of nature's light about it.
3. Speak fully to a particular exception about repentance.

SECT. I.

Wherein the Importance of the Difficulty is stated.

IF the Deists should allow sin to be so great an evil, as we pretend it is, it would exceedingly embarrass them; therefore they labour to smooth the matter by telling us, that either it is no evil, or one of not so great consideration, as is commonly imagined: but the wildness and unreasonableness of this attempt will be easily shewn, by a consideration of the evil of sin. It is not my design to write largely on this head, but only to condescend on a few of those considerations, whereon we insist for proving sin to be *exceeding sinful:* which, although they are built on rational grounds, yet we are led to them by the assistance of revealed light.

1. Sin is a *transgression* of a *law*, the highest law, the law of the supreme and righteous Governor of the world. *Where there is no law, there is no transgression.* And such as the law is, such is the transgression. There is no more just way of measuring the

evil of sin, than by considering the law it violates. The law bears the impress of the highest authority, that of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. Every transgression must therefore import, if not a contempt, yet certainly a want of due regard to this authority, which, how criminal it is in man, who is as to being, preservation and well-being, every way dependent, is easily understood.—Moreover, this law is not a mere arbitrary appointment, but such as is the necessary result of the nature of God and man; and therefore the violation of it, imports no less, than an accusation of the rectitude of God's nature, whence the law results; and charges unsuitableness thereto, upon the nature of man, as being so made, that, without wrong to itself, it cannot be subject to the rule of God's government. And who sees not how deeply this reflects on God?

2. Sin contradicts the great design of man's being. *God made us, and not we ourselves.* It is blasphemy to alledge, that infinite wisdom made so noble a creature as man without design. Nor can it reasonably be pretended, that the chief aim of God in making him was any other, than his having the self-satisfaction of having acted as became him, and having made a work every way worthy of his wisdom and holiness. And since man also was capable of proposing designs, it is foolish to imagine, that God either could or would allow him to make any other his chief end than the pleasure of God; or acting so as to make it appear that he was every way worthy of his Author. But when man sins he plainly counteracts what God designed, and he was obliged to design; for he pleases not God, but himself, and this is doing what in him lies to frustrate God of the design he had in his work, and debase the being and powers given him for the honor of God by employing them against him, and using them in contradiction to his declared will.

3. Sin misrepresents God. The works of God bear an impress of God's wisdom and power. Man only was made capable of representing his moral perfections, his holiness, justice, truth, and the like. But when he sins, he not only fails of his duty, but really misrepresents God his maker, as one who approves sin, that is directly cross to his will, which is ever congruous to the holiness of his nature; or, at least, as one, who either wants will or power to crush the contravener; and so he is represented either as unholy, or impotent; or one, who can tamely allow his will to be counteracted by a creature that he has made and sustains. But what horrid reflections are these on the holy God?

4. Sin accuses God of want of wisdom and goodness in appointing laws which were not for his creature's good, and he could not obey without detriment; of envy, in barring the creature by a law, from that which is necessary to his happiness; of insufficiency, to

"*secundum ductum vel ex ductu rationis agit) nullum boni & mali* "*formarent conceptum, quamdiu liberi essent.*"* Mr. Hobbs has been learnedly confuted by many, such as Dr. Cumberland, Mr. Tyrell, and almost all who write of the law of nature. Spinoza has likewise been examined by Wittichius and many others. The first, viz. Thomas Aikenhead, his grounds I shall purpose and examine.

The first in his own words runs thus, "I thought, says he, a "great part of morality, if not all, proceeded *ex arbitrio homi-* "*num*,† as of that of a kingdom, or commonwealth, or what most "men think convenient for such and such ends, and these ends "are always terminated upon being congruous to the nature of "things; now we see that according to men's fancies, things are "congruous or incongruous to their natures, if not to the body, "yet to the thinking faculty."

The sum of this confused discourse, which probably he learned from Hobbs, amounts to this: God has fixed no law to our moral actions, by which they are to be regulated. These which are called moral laws, are only the determinations of governments, or the concurring judgment of men, concerning what they think meet to be done for their own ends. That which some judge meet and congruous, others may find unsuitable to their nature and ends, and so are not obliged to obey. But 1. Are not all these ungrounded assertions, whereof no proof is offered, but the author's deluded fancy? Has it not been irrefragably demonstrated by as many as discourse of moral good and evil, that antecedently to any government among men, we are under a law, the law of nature, and that this is the will of God. 2. If all these had kept silence, does not the thing itself speak? What can be more evident, than that there is a law of nature, and that this is the law of God? We are certain, that we are made of rational natures, capable of laws and government. We are no less sure that God made us, and made us so. It is self-evident, that to him who made us, it belongs to govern, and dispose of us to those ends for which we were made. And we by our very beings are bound to obey, submit, and subject ourselves to his will and pleasure, who made us and on whom we every way depend, and therefore his will, if he make it known, is a law, and the highest law to us. Again, it is clear that this reason, if we attend to it, tells us that some things are to be done, and some things left undone; such as these, that we are to serve, love, obey and honor him that made us, upholds us, and on whom we every way depend; that we are to carry to-

* "If men were born free (and he is free according to Spinoza, who acts "according to the guidance of reason) they would form no conception of "good or evil, as long as they were free."

† "From the will of man."

ward our fellow-creatures, as it becomes those, who have the same original with us, who are subjected to the same rule, are obliged to pursue the same ends; and that we are to dispose o fourselves as the author of our nature allows us. These are all, if not self-evident, yet next to it, and easily deducible from principles that are so. Further, the reason that is implanted in us by God, tells us so, we are to take what it leads us to, while duly used, as the will of God, and so a law to us. "For whatever judgment "God makes a man with, concerning either himself, or other "things, it is God's judgment, and whatever is his judgment is a "law to man; nor can he neglect or oppose it without sin, being "in his existence made with a necessary subjection to God. Such "and such dictates being the natural operations of our minds, the "being and essential constitution of which, in right reasoning, we "owe to God; we cannot but esteem them the voice of God "within us, and consequently his law to us."*

What he tells us of men's different apprehensions, about what is right or wrong makes nothing to the purpose. That only shews that in many instances we are in the dark as to what is good and evil, which is granted; but will not infer that there is no fixed measure of good and evil. In many general truths, all who apply themselves to think, understand the terms, and have the truths proposed, do agree. And perhaps, all that is knowable of our duty by the light of nature, is deducible from such principles of morality, as all rational men who have them fairly proposed to them, must assent to. And deductions from laws, when duly made, are of equal authority with the principles from which they are inferred. And finally, when men, in pursuance of their perverse natures, follow what is cross to those dictates of reason, they are condemned by their consciences, which shews them under the obligation of a law, and that acting in a congruity to their natures as corrupt, is not the standard they are obliged to walk by, since their own reason checks them for doing it. They who would desire to have this matter fully discoursed, may read others who have done it designedly, of whom there is great plenty.

His second reason runs thus: "Also, we do not know what is "good or evil in itself, if not thus; whatsoever can be attributed "to God, that is good; and what cannot, is evil. And we know "not what can be attributed to God, but such things as by a de"duction we ascribe to him, we call perfect, and such as we deny "to be in him, we call imperfect, and so we must ignorantly com"mit a circle. There is no other notion of things in themselves "good or evil."

* Sir Charles Wolseley's Scripture Belief, page 32, 33.

It is much harder to find the sense of these words, if they have any, than to answer the argument. The design of it is to prove that there is no standard whereby we may judge what is good and what is evil. The force of the argument amounts to this, that there is no way how we come to know any thing to be good, but by this, that it may be ascribed to God. But we cannot know whether it is to be ascribed to God, unless we know that it is perfect or good.

This is thin sophistry, which I might easily expose, were it to any purpose to discover the weakness of that, which its author was ashamed of and disowned. As to the first proposition, "that there is no other way to know whether any thing be good or evil, but this, that it can or cannot be ascribed to God." 1. The complex proposition is false; for there are other ways whereby we may know things to be good or evil. And this holds whether we take it in a physical or moral sense. We know that to be morally good which God enjoins us to do. We know the will of God in some instances, from the nature God has given us; and from these instances our reason can infer others. As to physical good, we know things to be good or perfect, by acquaintance with the nature of things, and by the self-evident notions of perfection: for there are some things, such as dependence, subjection, and the like, which without any reasoning about the matter, we understand to be imperfect or perfect. As soon as we understand the terms, and know that a perfection is that which it is better for any being to have than to want: and then what these particular words, dependence, subjection, &c. signify. This alone overthrows his whole argument. 2. The maxim which he fixes as a standard, that it is good which may be ascribed to God, and that is not good which may not be ascribed to him; if it is taken in its full extent, it is false as to moral good, of which the only question is: for it is certain, that it is good for man to be a dependent, a subject, &c. which cannot be ascribed to God. If it is taken in a physical sense, it is not to the purpose; and besides, it would even in this sense need some caution.

As to his other proposition, "That we cannot otherwise know what is to be ascribed to God, than by knowing that it is good or perfect," it can scarcely be supposed to speak of good in a moral sense; and in any other sense it is impertinent. If it is understood in a moral sense it is likewise false, for we may know that things which are not in their own nature moral perfections, belong to God, such as power, omnipresence, &c. If it be understood in any other sense, we have nothing to do with it.

The next head that he adds is, "That all men will confess that "any thing may be morally evil and good also, and consequently "any thing decent or indecent, moral or immoral. Neither,

" though there were things in themselves evil, (if we do not ap-
" prehend other things instead of them) can we have any inclina-
" tion thereunto? Otherwise the will could wish evil."

But 1. Who will grant him (in any other sense that will be subservient to his purpose) that all actions are indifferent? I know none but men of his own principles. 2. As for what he pretends, that we cannot incline to that which is in its own nature evil, unless it be under the notion of good, I see not what this says for him; it is enough that we can do that action which is evil and prohibited, yea, and which we know is prohibited, to constitute sin and make the sinner deeply guilty.

But not to insist any further on this inconsiderable trifler, whose undigested notions scarce deserve the consideration we have given them; and much less did they become the awful gravity of the place where they were delivered. There are others of the deists who think it not safe to venture thus far: because in effect this overthrows all religion and establishes plain atheism: yet they may mince the matter and lessen sin as much as they can.

Herbert goes this way, telling us the sinner's excuse, that " 1. " *Homines sunt natura sua fragiles peccatoque obnoxii.* 2. " *Peccata hominum non tam in Dei contumeliam, quam in pro-* " *priam utilitatem, sub boni alicujus apparentis obtentu fieri ple-* " *rumque; ac licet in eo homines fallerentur, nihil tamen infen-* " *so in Deum animo patratum esse.*"* That is, " Men are by " nature frail and liable to sin: and they do not sin out of con-" tempt of God, but for their own profit, while sin appears un-" der the shew of good. And although in this men are deceiv-" ed, yet there is nothing done with any ill design against God."

A. W. in his letter to Charles Blount, pleads, " That though " the offence is committed against an infinite being, we are but " finite creatures, who commit sin."†

But now, as to the first of these reasons and excuses, I fear, if it plead any thing, it casts the fault over on God. Are we to excuse ourselves from our frailty? Well, either we are made so frail that we are not able to obey, or we are not; if we are able to obey, then where is the excuse when God requires no more of us than he gave us power to perform? If we are not able, then how came God to subject us to a law we were not able to obey? If we have rendered ourselves unable, is not this our fault?

As to the second, " that we do not sin out of contempt of the Deity, but for our own advantage." I answer, 1. The principle that the sinner goes on, according to this apology made for him, viz. That the thing he does, though it crosses the law of God, yet makes for his own advantage, is highly injurious to, and

* De Relig. Gentilium, Cap. 5. page 199.
† Oracles of Reason.

blasphemous against God: for it supposes that God has barred man from what contributes to his happiness, and supposes that more advantage is to be had by disobedience, which is a high aggravation of the fault, 2. I will not grant him, that there is no opposition in the heart to God. What though there be not plain, declared, direct and open hostility; yet there is an alienation of affection, aversion from converse with, and a neglect of God to be found with all in more or less, of which their actions are a sufficient proof.

As to the third, "that an offence, though against an infinite God, is lessened by the consideration of the sinner's being finite:" I answer, 1. This excuse pleads for all sin alike: for let the sinner sin never so deeply, yet he is finite still. 2. If this be well considered, it is perfectly ridiculous: for the measure of sin, its greatness is not to be taken this way, but the contrary; for provided the object against whom it is committed is infinite, the meaner the person is that commits it, the greater still is the fault.

But in very deed, all these attempts to extenuate sin, as they are useless to sinners, who are not judged by man, but God, and not to be dealt with according to the estimate he makes, but that which God makes of sin; so likewise they smell rank of the want of a due regard for the honor of the Deity, and are of the worst consequences to the world, since they tend to encourage sin, open a door to impiety, and embolden sinners to go on in courses they too much incline to. Besides, such excuses for sin do but ill become persons who make such an horrible out-cry against the doctrine of satisfaction upon all occasions, as having a tendency to make forgiveness cheap in sinner's eyes, and to embolden men to sin without fear. May not the charge be here retorted? Who gives the greatest encouragement to sin, he that asserts the necessity of a satisfaction, or he who extenuates sin to that degree as to encourage the sinner to hope he may get off without a satisfaction? I shall, to what has been said, subjoin a few words from a late discourse. If the quotation seem long, the excellency of it will easily excuse it; besides, it is so full to the purpose, and leads so directly to that which is the design of what has hitherto been said. "Furthermore, it is to be consid-
"ered, that the rights of the divine government, the quality and
"measures of offences committed against it; and when or upon
"what terms they may be remitted; or in what case it may be
"congruous to the dignity of that government, to recede from such
"rights, are matters of so high a nature, that it becomes us to be
"very sparing in making any estimate about them, especially a
"diminishing one. Even among men, how sacred things are ma-
"jesty and the rights of government? And how much above the

"reach of a vulgar judgment? Suppose a company of peasants that understand little more than what is within the compass of their mattock, plough and shovel, should take upon them to judge of the rights of their prince, and make an estimate of the measure of offences, committed against the majesty and dignity of government, how competent judges would we think them? And will we not acknowledge the most refined human understanding as incompetent to judge of the rights of the divine government? Or measure the injuriousness of the offence done against it, as the meanest peasant to make an estimate of these matters in a human government? If only the reputation be wronged of a person of a better quality, how strictly is it insisted on, to have the matter tried by his peers, or persons of an equal rank, such as are capable of understanding honour and reputation! How would it be resented, that an affront put upon a nobleman, should be commited to the judgment of smiths and coblers, espccially if they were *participes criminis*,* and as well parties as judges?

"When the *regalia*† of the great Ruler and Lord of heaven and earth are invaded, his temple violated, his presence despised, his image torn down thence and defaced: Who among the sons of men are either great, or knowing, or innocent enough to judge of the offence and wrong? Or how fit it is, that it be remitted without recompence? Or what recompence would be proportionable? How supposable is it, that there may be congruities in this matter, obvious to the divine understanding, which infinitely exceed the measure of ours."‡

From what has been said, it is easy to understand the importance of the case. All mankind are involved in sin, lie under this dreadful guilt, and that not in one, but in many instances. Now if they are not sure that it may be removed, and know not in what way this is to be done, they must either not take up the case, or they must be under continual disquietments, dread the issue, and fear divine resentments. They can never expect any reward for obedience, and consequently they must languish in it, and so all religion that can be available is lost.

Sect. II.

Shewing the darkness of Nature's Light as to Pardon.

THE importance of the case being thus cleared, we now proceed to demonstrate the insufficiency of nature's light to help

* "Sharers in the crime."
† "Royal prerogatives."
‡ Dr. How's Living Temple, Part 2. page 237, 238, 239.

out of this strait. And that we may without fear assert it so, is evident from the ensuing considerations:

1. That light which failed men so far, as to a discovery of the strait, is not likely to help them out of it. If we understand not where the difficulty lies, and how great it is, we are never likely to solve it. Now it is undeniable, that a great part of the world understood not the evil of sin, or of how vast a consequence it was to be assured about the pardon of it. The prevalent darkness of their minds about the nature, holiness and justice of the Deity; their own natures and relation to him; their ignorance of the nature of sin; the commonness of it in the world; their strong inclinations to it, and other things of a like nature, kept them from apprehending the difficulty of the case. But above all, the best moralists amongst the philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, seemed utterly unconcerned. And the reason is plain, their pride blinded them so, that they idolized their own virtues, and made no reckoning of their sins.

2. They who had a little more concern about sin, saw somewhat of the difficulty of this matter, but found themselves at a loss what way to relieve themselves: and therefore they had recourse, some to philosophy, music and mathematics, for the purgation of their souls; and others to lustrations, sacrifices, and diverse washings, and I do not know what other fancies, which had no manner of foundation in reason, no suitableness to the nature of the difficulty, no divine warrant, and therefore were never able to satisfy the conscience, as to the sinner's acceptance with God, and the removal of the guilt. These being only the productions of their own imaginations, notwithstanding of all these, their fears continued, and they remained under apprehensions that even death should not terminate their miseries, as Lucretius himself sings:

> ——At mens sibi conscia facti,
> Præmetuens adhibet stimulos, terretque flagellis,
> Nec videt interea, qui terminus esse malorum
> Possit, nec qui sit panarum denique finis,
> Atque eadem metuit magis hæc in morte gravescant.*

3. They who either thought somewhat deeper of the case, or at least seemed to do so, especially at times when the impressions they had of divine justice were quickened by some terrible plagues or judgments, had recourse to things that were so far from relieving, that they really increased the guilt, I mean that abomina-

* "But the mind conscious to itself of actual guilt, by fearing punishment applies stings to itself and terrifies itself with whips: nor does it see in the mean time how any bounds can be set to its sufferings, nor what will at last be the end of its punishment, and fears lest these same sufferings should grow more grievous at death."

ble custom of human sacrifices. This cruel custom almost universally obtained in the world, if we may believe either profane or sacred records; of which Dr. Owen in his treatise of *Vindictive Justice* gives many instances. They not only sacrificed men, but even multitudes of them. The instances of this kind in the sacred records are known. As to others, Ditmarus quoted by Dr. Owen tells us: "That the Normans and Danes, every "year in the month of January did sacrifice to their gods ninety-"nine men, as many horses, dogs and cocks."* Clemens Alexandrianus quoted by the same author, tells what the usage of the nations in this matter was, and on what occasion—"*Jam vero cum* "*civitates & gentes tanquam pestes invasissent, sæva postularunt* "*libamina; & Aristomenes quidem Messenius, Ithometæ Jovi,* "*trecentos mactavit, se tot & tales rite sacrificare existimans, in* "*quibus etiam Theopompus rex Lacedæmonum erat, præclara* "*victima. Tauri autem populi, qui habitabant circa Tauri-*"*cam Chersonesum, quoscunque hospites apud se ceperint, Dianæ* "*Tauricæ eos statim sacrificant (inde inhospitalia littora.)* "*Hæc tua sacrificia Euripides in scena tragice decantat.*"† Here are no less than three hundred sacrificed at once, and among them a king. Here are strangers sacrificed. And any one that will read there will find how usual it was to sacrifice their children and nearest relations. The custom is barbarous, and fully speaks out the despair of men awakened to a serious consideration of sin, and the darkness of nature's light. If it could have pointed to any other thing that could quiet the conscience, civilized nations, such as those among whom this custom did prevail, would never have had recourse to it.

4. It is no wonder that men should be brought to such straits; for they wanted the knowledge of many things, that were of absolute necessity to make them once so much as understand what a case they were in. They knew not, nor, as has been proved could they know the rise of sin, and therefore could not know what estimate to make of it, nor what God would make of it.—They knew neither the extent of the mercy nor justice of God, without which it was impossible to determine in the case.

5. The questions that must be resolved before the mind of a sinner, that once understands his state, can be satisfied, are so ma-

* Dr. Owen de Justitia Vindicatrice, Cap. 4, page 69.

† "But when, like the plague, they had over-run all states and nations, "they required cruel offerings. Aristomenes, the Messenian, sacrificed "three hundred men to Jupiter Ithometes, among whom likewise was Theo-"pompus king of the Lacedemonians, an illustrious victim. And the Tauri, "a nation in Crim Tartary, whenever they caught any strangers among them, "they immediately sacrificed them to Diana Taurica, whence their shores "were proverbially stiled inhospitable. Euripides relates these sacrifices of "yours in a tragical manner on the stage."

ny, so intricate, and so palpably above the reach of unenlightened reason, that it is foolish to pretend that nature's light will or can satisfy the mind of any man in the case. Men may pretend what they will, who either do not take up the case, or who are otherwise themselves satisfied by divine revelation; but they who seriously, and without partiality or prejudice view the case, will have other thoughts. Who will give me rational satisfaction as to those and the like questions? Whether, considering the greatness of sin, the justice, wisdom and holiness of God, and the honor of his government, it is consistent to pardon any sin? If it be, whether he will pardon all, many or few sins? What, or what degrees of sin he will forgive? Whether he will pardon without any reparation for the honor of his laws or not? Upon what, or what terms he will do it? If he require reparation, what reparation, and by whom is it to be performed? How shall we know that he has pardoned? If he pardon, whether will he remit all punishment due to sin, or how much? Whether will he merely pardon, or will he over and above re-admit the sinner to grace, and to as entire favor as before he sinned? Whether will he not only pardon, but reward the sinner's imperfect obedience? Unless all of these are resolved, the difficulty is not loosed. And who will undertake to resolve them and give rational satisfaction that understands the case.

6. These questions are not only above the reach of man; but they belong not to him to judge and decide them. The offence is committed against God. He alone understands what the contempt of his authority, the disorder brought into his government by sin, and the disobedience of his creature amounts unto: what is fit to be done in the case, he alone is judge, at his tribunal it is to be tried. Man is too ignorant, too guilty and too partial in his own favor to be allowed to judge? Now where are the decisions of God in the case to be found? Are they legible in the works of creation or providence, or consciences of men? In the works of creation it cannot be pretended. The works of providence afford innumerable instances of his justice, some of his forbearing sinners, even while they continue in their sin, and loading them with outward effects of his bounty: But where is the sinner, of whom we can say, God has forgiven him? Or said that he will forgive? The consciences of men read them sometimes sad lectures of justice; but never, if they be not informed from revelation, any of forgiveness.

7. All the pretences that are offered for relief in this case, are absurd, vain and insignificant. They are all reducible to this one head, That God is infinitely merciful; but this gives not the least relief. For,

1. I ask, must God then of necessity exercise mercy, or is the egress and exercise of this mercy necessary? If it is not, but still remains arbitrary, and in the pleasure of God whether he will pardon or not; then I inquire, where is the relief pretended? Does it not all vanish? Are we not as much at a loss as before, whether he will pardon, or how far, or upon what terms? If it is necessary in its egress, then I enquire, how is this reconcileable with the notion of mercy, that seems to respect voluntary and undeserved acts of favor shown to them, to whom God was not obliged to show any? How is this reconcileable to or consistent with justice, which is exercised in punishing sinners? By what arguments can this be made appear? Whence is it that there are so many acts of justice, and no instances known to, or knowable by the light of nature, of God's having pardoned any?

2. Mercy is either unlimited in its egress or it is not. If it is limited and cannot be exercised, but upon such and such provisos as make the exercise of it consistent with God's aversion to sin, and with the regard he has for the authority of his laws, the concern he has for the honor of his government, and his justice, wisdom and holiness, then we are where we were before: For who can tell whether it be consistent with these things to pardon? In what case and upon what provisos: if it is not limited to any such qualifications, then I desire to know, how this is reconcileable to his nature? How is such mercy consistent with any exercise of justice at all? What account can be given of the direful effects of justice, whereof the world is full? By what means can it be reconciled to the holiness of God's nature to pardon impenitent sinners? What need is there for any to guard against sin, since upon this supposition, all sin shall be forgiven?

3. Is infinite mercy universal in its extent? If it is not, then I desire to know, what sins, what sinners shall be pardoned? How shall any know whether his sins are the sins that are to be pardoned? If it is universal in its extent, and all sins must be pardoned; then is there not a door opened for all sin? How can this be proven? Why have we no evidence of this in God's providential dealing? Whence have we so many evidences of the contrary? If it is said that mercy must more or less be exercised towards all, then I inquire, who tells us so? How far shall it be exercised? Will it pardon all or part? Upon what terms? Will it not only pardon, but remunerate the guilty?

4. I inquire who are the proper objects of mercy? Or what is requisite to constitute the proper object of it? Amongst men, the proper object of that mercy which belongs to governors, is not sin and misery. To spare and pardon upon this score only, is a plain vice in men, especially in governors. But the object of mercy is such sin and misery, as is consistent with the honor and good of

the governor, government and the governed to pardon. Now, if it be thus in this case, then I see nothing, but we are where we were, and are plunged into all our difficulties; and why it should not be thus, I see no reason. For there is no man who knows what God is, what sin is, what justice is, that will say it is consistent with the honor, justice, wisdom and holiness of God to pardon impenitent sinners, going on in their sins. And when they say, that his mercy only requires him to pardon penitent sinners, then this plainly says, that the exercise of his mercy is confined to those who are its proper objects, that is, not to miserable sinners, for the impenitent are most so; but to those whom he may spare, in a decorum to his government and congruity to his other perfections. And indeed this is what cannot in reason be denied: and when it is granted, then it remains a question, not yet decided, nor indeed determinable by reason, whether repentance alone is sufficient to this purpose?

5. The case of justice and mercy are quite different as to their egress: For justice has respect to a fixed rule, an universal rule, and requires that regard be had to it, in dealing with all that are under that rule: whereas mercy only is conversant about particular instances, according to the wisdom and pleasure of him in whom it resides.

6. The infiniteness of either of these attributes, neither requires nor admits, that there be infinite numbers of instances of either: but that the acts of justice and mercy be such as becomes the infinite nature of God, when it is proper to exercise them, or when the wisdom, holiness, justice or mercy of God require that they be exercised.

But the Deists object, 1. "That upon supposition that God will "not pardon sin, there is no use of his mercy."* I answer, we do not say he will not pardon sin; but we say, nature's light cannot tell whether he will pardon it or not, or what is the case wherein mercy takes place. We own its use, but we say, nature's light cannot tell when and how it is proper to exercise it.

Again, it is pretended, "That God is infinitely merciful, then "he must as the least of its operations pardon the greatest of "sins."† This is plainly denied, and we have told wherefore above.

It is further pretended, "That justice has done its business, "when it has condemned the sinner, and then mercy brings him "off:"‡ but this is gross ignorance. It belongs as much to justice to take care that its sentence be executed, as to see it passed.

Again, it is urged, "That though God be infinitely just as well "as merciful, yet his justice is only as inherent, not as extensive

* Aikenhead's Speech. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

" as his mercy toward us : for we are punished only according to " our deservings, but mercy is shown us above our deservings."* The first part is false. The very contrary assertion, viz. that justice is more extensive, is true, as has been cleared above, if we respect the number of objects. The proof of it is a plain sophism. For 1. It is not true that mercy bestows its effects, which in their nature are above our deservings, to more persons than justice gives its effects, which are according to desert. 2. The effects of mercy are not more above deserving, than the effects of justice are according to it. 3. The effects of justice are with infinite exactness proportioned to deservings. And, all that can be said is, that the effects of mercy are suited to the nature of infinite mercy, not that they are given to infinite number of persons, or infinite degrees.

Further, it is pretended, " That God with whom we have to " do, is a Father who will not animadvert severely upon his peni- " tent son."† I answer, as he is a father, so he is a righteous judge. Further, though he be a father, yet he is not such a father as men are, infirm, liable to failings, that needs his children, that may give them occasion or temptation to offend, that is of the same nature with them. And hence no firm argument can be inferred from any thing that is known in this matter by the light of nature. Besides, the meanest offence against God is more atrocious, than the greatest offence against one's natural father. For which nevertheless there is no forgiveness, but punishment without mercy, by the law of nations and nature.

Finally, all these are but generals, that may well raise suspicions in the minds of men, but can never give particular satisfaction to any one man, as to his case, or any one of the particular difficulties that have been mentioned. They no more satisfy, than those notions that generally prevailed, of the placability of the Deity, which had their rise at first from revelation, were continued by the necessity of sinners, who having challenges for sin, behooved to take sanctuary some where, and handed down by tradition : But being general, and leaving men at a loss about the means of atoning the Deity, were really of no use if not to keep men from running into downright despair, and keep them up in attendance upon somewhat that looked like religion ; but whereon the minds of such as really understood any thing of the case, could never find satisfaction.

There is only one thing that seems of any moment, that is objected to all this ; and that is, that nature's light which discovers the sore, discovers a salve for it, to wit, repentance, to which we

* A. W. in his Letter, Oracles of Reason.

† Blount's Relig. Laici. page 69. Herbert de Relig. Gen. page 199.

shall answer in the following section, that is peculiarly designed to consider this.

Sect. III.

Wherein it is inquired whether Repentance is sufficient to atone for Sin? How far Nature's Light enables to it? What assurance Nature's Light gives of Pardon upon Repentance.

It now remains that we consider the only exception, which is of moment, and that is, that repentance is a sufficient atonement, that nature's light discovers this, and so we are not left without relief. This is the more considerable that several Christians, yea divines of great note, and some of them deservedly of high esteem, have seen meet, in compliance with their several hypotheses in divinity, to drop assertions that seem to favour this. We shall first propose their opinions, who assert this, and then consider it.

The Deists go all this way as one man. I shall offer one for all, and it is Charles Blount, who not only speaks the sense, but translates the very words of the learned lord Herbert. He tells us, then, "That repentance is the only known and public means, "which on our part is required for satisfying the divine justice, "and returning to the right way of serving God."* And for clearing this, he premises to it these ensuing considerations, "1. That he that judgeth man is his Father, and doth look on "him as a frail creature, obnoxious to sin. 2. That he generally "finds men sin, rather out of frailty, than out of any desire to "offend his divine Majesty. 3. That if man had been made inwardly prone to sin, and yet destitute of all inward means to "return to him again, he had been not only remediless in himself, "but more miserable, than it could be supposed an infinite Goodness did at first create, and doth still perpetuate human kind.— "4. That man can do no more on his part, for the satisfying of "divine justice, than to be heartily sorry and repent him of his "sins, as well as to endeavor, through his grace, to return to the "right way, from which through his transgression, he had erred: "or if this did not suffice for the making of his peace, that the "Supreme God by inflicting some temporal punishment in this "life, might satisfy his own justice. 5. That if temporal punishment in this life, were too little for the sin committed, he might "yet inflict a greater punishment hereafter in the other life, without giving eternal damnation to those, who (if not for the love "of goodness) yet, at least, upon sense of punishment, would not "sin eternally. Notwithstanding, since these things may again be

* Religio Laici, page 68, 69, 70.

" controverted, I shall insist only upon that universally acknow-
" ledged proposition first laid down."* This proposition, with the explications, he translates from Herbert, only has made some small additions.

It is no wonder to see those speak so; but it is a little more odd to hear Christians talk so. One who would seem very zealous for Christianity tells us, " That the God of patience and conso-
" lation, who is rich in mercy, would forgive his frail offspring, if
" they acknowledge their faults, disapproved the iniquity of their
" transgressions, begged his pardon, and resolved in earnest to
" conform their actions to this rule, which they owned to be just
" and right: this way of reconciliation, this hope of atonement,
" the light of nature revealed to them. He that made use of this
" candle of the Lord, (viz. reason) so far as to find his duty, could
" not miss to find also the way to reconciliation and forgiveness,
" when he had failed of his duty."† Much more speaks he to the same purpose.

But it is stranger to hear divines speak so. And yet we find one telling us, " That the same light of nature, which declares to
" us our duty, dictates to us, when we have failed in that duty,
" to repent and turn to God with trusting to his mercy and par-
" don, if we do so and not else. We do find it legible in our
" hearts, that God is good and wisely gracious to pity our infir-
" mities, to consider our lost estate, and necessary frailty, as that
" there is a God, and any worship that is at all due to him."‡

To the same purpose the learned Baxter speaks in his Reasons of the Christian Religion, Part 1. Chap. 17. Dr. Whichcote in his sermon on Acts xii. 38. and others too large to quote.

But now, with all due deference to those great names, I shall take leave to offer the following remarks, wherein I shall clear my own mind, and offer the reasons on which I dissent from them.

1. I observe that the Deists speak more uncertainly about this matter; whereas these Christian writers seem more positive. The Deists seem not to want their fears that repentance may not serve the turn, and therefore they seem willing to admit of temporal punishments, and even punishments after time, only they have not will to think of eternal punishments; as we heard from Herbert and Blount, who both speak in the same words on this head. But the Christian writers are positive. And I am jealous the reason is not, that they saw farther into the light of nature than the Deists; but that they lean more firmly to the scripture revelation, which assures us that penitent sinners shall be forgiven.—

* Herbert de Relig. Gentil. page 199.
† Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, page 255, 256.
‡ Mr. Humphrey's Peaceable Disquisitions, Chap. 14. page 57.

Though I must add, the scripture no where says that penitent sinners shall be forgiven upon their penitence, as that which is sufficient to atone the justice of God. And to speak plainly, however confident those worthy persons are, that they have read this doctrine in the book of nature, I dare be bold to affirm that they had either failed in the discovery, or stammered a little more in reading their lesson, if they had not learned it before-hand out of the book of the Scriptures; though the thing seems, when they have read it there, to approve itself so much to reason, that reason cannot but assent to it. It is well observed by one of those authors, with whom we now manage this debate, "That when "truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to "be favorable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own under-"standing the discovery of what, in truth, we borrowed from "others, or at least, finding we can prove, what at first we learned "from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth, "which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing "seems hard to our understandings, that is once known; and be-"cause what we see with our own eyes, we are apt to overlook, "or forget the help we had from others, who first shewed and "pointed it out to us, as if we were not at all beholden to them "for that knowledge; for knowledge being only of known truths; "we conclude our faculties would have led us into it without any "assistance; and that we know these truths by the strength and "native light of our own minds, as they did, from whom we re-"ceived them by theirs, only they had the luck to be before us.— "Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every "one, as his private possession, as soon as he (profiting by other's "discoveries) has got it into his own mind; and so it is; but not "properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. "He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in "what others have delivered, but their pains were of another "sort, who first brought those truths to light, which he afterwards "derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds "his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far, in such "a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigor, little con-"sidering how much he owes to their pains, who cleared the woods, "drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable; "without which he might have toiled much with little progress.— "A great many things which we have been bred in the belief of "from our cradles (and are notions grown familiar, and as it were, "natural to us, under the gospel) we take for unquestionable obvious "truths and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we "might have been in doubt, or in ignorance of them, had revelation "been silent. It is no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives "its suffrage too to the truths revelation hath discovered. But it is

" our mistake to think that because reason confirms them to us, " we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in " that clear evidence we now possess them."* How applicable this excellent discourse is to the case in hand, will appear from what we design to subjoin on this head. Though after all, that which the scripture delivers, and reason confirms in this case, is not, " That repentance is sufficient to atone the justice of God, " or that God will pardon a penitent sinner, merely on the account " of his penitence," which the Deist's case requires. The scriptures plainly teach the contrary, and those learned persons, or some of them at least who own them, believe according to the scriptures, the contrary, which makes a considerable difference betwixt them and the Deists; though in this case, they seem to speak the same things. But that which the scripture asserts, is, " That peni- " tence is a qualification suitable to a sinner to be pardoned, " and that it is not suitable to the wisdom and justice of God " to pardon one, who is not sorry for former offences, and resolves " to obey for the future."* Reason confirms this indeed, but it is not to the purpose.

2. But to come a little more close to the purpose; this repentance, which is pretended to be sufficient, consists of two parts, *sorrow for the offence*, and *a return to obedience*. This last part, *a return to obedience*, what is it? Nothing, but only a performance of the duties we were antecedently bound unto by the law of creation, which only receives a new denomination from its relation to an antecedent deviation, or sin. This denomination adds no new worth to it, nor does the relation whereon it is founded.—Wherefore we can never reasonably suppose, that there is any great matter in this, that can atone for the transgression. It is well if it obtains approbation as a part of our duty. But no reasonable man can pretend that it atones for any part of our sin.

3. Though nature's light discovers our obligation to that duty, which now, because sin preceded, must be called a return; yet it is a question, if nature's light is able to bring a sinner, that has once gone away, to such a return as is necessary. For 1. We have above proved that nature's light is defective as to motives to obedience, as to the discovery of particular duties, and much more is it defective as to motives to a return: because there is more required to encourage a sinner to come back, who has once offended, than to engage him to continue. There is a discouragement arising from fear of punishment, and falling short of any reward he might have expected, upon the account of his sin to be removed, and that is not easily done, as shall be shown. 2 Besides, not only discouragements lie in the way of a return, but cross inclinations, aversions from duty, and inclinations to sin.—

* Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, page 279, 280, 281.

Now I am not satisfied that nature's light can remove, or direct how to remove these; of which we may speak more fully in the next chapter. So that as for this part of repentance we neither see of what use it is as to atonement, nor do we find it clear that nature's light can bring any to it.

4. The stress of the business then must lean on this sorrow for by-gone transgressions, that is the other part of the composition. But here I am sure it will be readily granted, that every sort of sorrow for sin will not serve. If one is only grieved for the loss he has sustained, the hazard he has run himself into, and the evil he has to suffer, or fears at least for his offence; this can be available to no man. Wherefore though nature's light may bring a man to this, and has oft done it, yet this signifies nothing in the case.

5. The sorrow, that only can be pretended, is that which arises purely, or at least principally, from concern for the dishonor done to God. Now as to this sorrow, it is to be observed, that it is not any action of ours done in obedience to any command: but it is a passion, in its own nature uneasy, as all sorrow is, though suitable to a sinner, and, upon the supposition, that he is so, useful perhaps. And it results from the joint influence of prevailing love to God, his law and authority, and a clear conviction of sin's having injured his honor, and our being, on this account, obnoxious.

6. It is not easily to be granted, that nature's light can bring any man to this sorrow. Since 1. It is evident that the temper men are naturally of, is quite contrary to that which gives rise to such a sorrow. We are naturally averse from God, as shall be made appear afterwards, and are not under the influence of any such prevalent love to him, and it is not easy to prove that nature's light is able to remove this natural aversion of the heart from God: but of this more in the next chapter. 2. God can never appear amiable to a sinner, if he is not revealed as one ready to forgive. We cannot be sorrowful for our sin, if we are not seriously convinced that we have sinned, and see the demerit of sin. If we are convinced that we have sinned, and deserve punishment, we cannot have prevalent love to God, which is requisite to give life to this sorrow, make it run in the right channel, and proceed on those accounts, which will make it acceptable to God, or available to us, unless he appear to us as ready to forgive, which nature's light doth not discover.

7. I doubt if nature's light calls us to repentance. I allow that there are several things obvious to nature's light, which may be said to drive us to repentance, because they serve to discover to us these things whereon this sorrow follows, bind the obligation on us to that duty, which, because of the preceding sin is called a return, and serve as arguments to enforce the compliance, provided we had a call or invitation to return, I mean a new call. For

clearing this, we are to observe that, were man innocent, and guilty of no fault, and had his obedience no imperfection, necessarily cleaving to it, and were he under no such inconveniency as might make him dread wrath, or fear his obedience might be rejected; in that case a discovery of the obligation he lies under to duty, were a call and invitation sufficient as securing him, at least as to the acceptance of his duty. But where there are those things in his case, sin and imperfection cleaving to the duty, and the performer chargeable with guilt on both those accounts, in order to engage him to duty, there is requisite a new call or invitation, securing him against those grounds of fear, and giving him ground to expect acceptance. Now it is such a call as this, that only can bring the sinner to repentance. And this we deny that nature's light gives; though we own that it discovers many things, that may be said in some sense, to lead to repentance: Because, upon supposition of such an invitation, they are improveable as arguments to enforce compliance with duty. Thus, if God invite me back again, his goodness discovered in the works of creation and providence, invites to go to him, and all the direful evidences of his anger against sinners persuade the same thing: and therefore may be said to lead, or rather drive to repentance; because they have a tendency that way in their own nature, and are capable of such an improvement: But still it is only upon the foregoing supposition.

8. To make this matter yet a little more clear, I grant that the light of nature discovers sinful man to be still under an obligation to obey God. As long as God is God, and man his creature, man is under a tie to subjection, and God has a right to man's obedience. This obedience to which man is bound, after once he has sinned, must be called a return. Further the light of nature teaches, that if man had yielded perfect obedience, he should not have done it in vain. Acceptance, at least, he should have had, and what other reward the goodness of God thought meet. And that man sustains a great loss by sin, that intervenes betwixt him and his expectations from the goodness of God, and besides, exposes him to the hazard of his just resentment, which, if it is seen, as by nature's light in some measure it may be, will occasion sorrow. Further, nature's light will teach that the more deeply we sin, the more we have to fear, and therefore out of fear and a regard to our own interest and expectation of being freed from those severer judgments, which a progress in sin draw on men, may be induced to return. Now all this nature's light discovers: but neither is this sorrow, which savours of some regard to ourselves, but of little or none to God; nor this return, which is not that cheerful, cordial obedience that God requires and accepts, of any avail in the case. No man, that knows what he says, will pretend, that

such a sorrow or such a return is sufficient to atone the justice of God for by-gones, or even obtain acceptance for itself, which has so much of love to self, and so little of that which respects God.

9. But the repentance that is available in this case is a sorrow, flowing from prevalent love to God, and grieving, if not only, yet principally for the wrong done to God, and a cheerful following of duty upon prospect of God's being a rewarder of it. Now to call or to make up a sufficient invitation to a sinner, to such a repentance, it is requisite that 1. God be represented in such a way, as a sinner that sees himself guilty, can love him, delight in him, and draw near to him. But this he can never be, if he is not represented as one with whom certainly *there is forgiveness*. 2. It requires further, that God be represented as one, who will accept of sinners' obedience, notwithstanding of their desert of wrath for former disobedience, and this requires still that he be a God that forgives. 3. Further, it is requisite, that he be represented as one, that will accept of obedience, not only from one that has sinned, but that implies sin and imperfection in it. Now this cannot be, if he is not known to be one that is *plenteous in mercy and will abundantly pardon*. Now I say the light of nature gives no such discovery of God: and therefore gives no call or sufficient invitation to his repentance.

10. Nor will it help out here, to say, that the light of nature doth represent God as placable, one who may be pacified: for, should I grant that it does so, yet this cannot invite to such an obedience, so long as 1. It is left a question, whether he be actually reconciled, or positively determined to forgive? 2. Especially considering, that he has not pointed to, and positively declared on what terms he will be appeased. Yea 3. Since moreover he has given no visible instance, knowable by the light of nature, that he has forgiven any particular person. But 4. On the contrary, the world is full of the most terrible effects of his displeasure, and these falling most heavily on the best, even those who go farthest in a compliance with duty. In a word, these dark notions of a placable God, which yet is the utmost that unenlightened reason can pretend to, are utterly insufficient to bring any of the children of men to that repentance we are now in quest of; it is so sunk, and as it were quite obscured by cross appearances. And all that can reasonably be said, is, that in the providence of God there is such a seeming contrariety of good and evil, that men know not what to make of it, but are tossed by contrary appearances. And of this we have a fair acknowledgment by one, who, besides that he was a person of great learning, was not only a great stickler for the natural discoveries of this placability, but one of the first broachers of it, being led to it by the peculiar hypothesis he maintained and advanced in divinity, I mean the learned Amy-

rald. After he has asserted the natural discoveries of this placability, and alleged that they lead to repentance, yet subjoins: "But there are (says he) motions in the corrupt nature of man which "frustrates the effect, if God did not provide for it in another manner (that is by revelation.) For man flies from the presence of "God through fear of punishment, and cannot hinder the prevalence of it in his soul; so that as a man affrighted beholds nothing stedfastly, but always imagines new occasions of terror, and "represents hideous phantasms to himself; so we are not able to allow ourselves leisure to consider attentively this dispensation "of the goodness of God towards the wicked, nor thereby to assure ourselves of obtaining mercy and pardon. As a lewd "wretch, whose conscience bears him witness of many heinous "crimes, though he should perceive some connivance in the magistrate for a time, and his judge shew him some countenance, "cannot but be distrustful of him, and suspect that he does but "defer his punishment to another time, and assuredly reserves it "for him; especially if he hath an opinion that the magistrate is "not such an one as himself, but abhors the wickednesses committed by him. Now are we universally thus principled, that as "we hate those whom we fear, so we never bear good will toward "them of whom we have some diffidence. And the distrusting "the good will of any one being a step to fear, is likewise by the "same reason, a degree of hatred; unless the distrust proceed "to such a measure as to be an absolute fear; for then the coldness of affection is turned into perfect hatred. Wherefore man "thus distrusting the good will of God towards him, consequently can have but a very slight affection to him; yea, he will even "become his enemy in as much as the distrust in this case will "be extremely great."* Thus far he goes. Now methinks this quite overthrows the placability he had before asserted discoverable by the light of nature, at least as to any use it can be supposed of for assuring sinners of pardon, or inviting them to repentance.

11. But to go a step further, I cannot see that the light of nature is able to give us any assurance of this placability. Where is it in the book of nature that we may read this truth, that God is placable? Is it in the works of creation? No, this is not pretended. Nor can it be, they were all absolved and finished before the entrance of sin, and cannot be supposed to carry on them any impressions of placability to sinners. Is it in the works of providence. Yes, here it is pretended. And what is it in the works of providence that is alleged to evince this placability? Is it that God spares sinners for some time, and not only so, but bestows many outward good things on them, whom he spares? Yes,

* Amyrald of Religions, Part 2. Chap. 17. page mihi, 253, 254.

this is that whereon the whole stress of the business is laid. But I cannot see the force of this to assure us that God is placable. For 1. It is certain that the nature of the things do not infer certainly any such thing. Forbearance is not forgiveness: nor does it intimate any design to forgive. It may be exercised, where there is a certain design and fixed purpose of punishing. And what relation have a few of those outward things, whereby love or hatred cannot be known, unto peace and reconciliation with God? It is, I know, pretended, that even this forbearance is a sort of forgiveness, and that all the world sharing in it, are in some sort forgiven. So Mr. Baxter says. If this learned person or any other has a mind to extend the notion of pardon so far as to include even reprieves under that name, we cannot hinder: but it is certain, that no abatement of the punishment, far less the dissolution of the obligation, which is that ordinarily meant by pardon, do necessarily follow upon, or is included in a delay of punishment. The slowness in execution, which may proceed upon many grounds, hid in the depth of divine wisdom from us, may be more than compensated by its severity when it comes. *Leaden feet*, as some have used the expression, *may be compensated by iron hands*. And when men have seriously weighed outward good things, which are thrown in greatest plenty in the lap of the most wicked, and are full of vanity and commonly ensnare, they can see but very little of any mercy designed them thereby. And if any inference toward a placability is deducible, which I profess I cannot see, I am sure that it is far above the reach of not a few, if not most of mankind, to make the deduction and trace the argument. And so it can be of no use to them. 2. All those things are consistent with a sentence standing unrepealed and never to be repealed, if either scripture, which tells us that God *exercises much long suffering*, and gives plenty of good things to the *vessels of wrath*; or reason, which assures us that persons continuing obstinate to the last in sin, cannot evite judgment, may be believed. 3. As there is nothing in the nature of the things that can ascertain us of God's placability, much less is there any in the condition of the person, to whom this dispensation is exercised. Were these bestowed on the most virtuous, or were there an increase of them, as persons proceeded in virtue, and came nearer and nearer to repentance; or were there on the other hand a continued evidence of wrath and implacability towards obstinate sinners, this then would seem to say somewhat. But all things are quite contrary, the worst have the most of them, and the best have commonly least of them. What will the sinner say, that God is inviting me by this goodness to virtue? No, if I should turn virtuous I might rather expect to be worse dealt with. That is a bootless way for any thing I can see in it. Does not the scrip-

ture and experience tell us, that thus things go, and that such use sinners have made of this dispensation? And so dark is it, that even they who had God's mind in the word to unriddle the mystery, have been shaken at it so far, that they have been upon the brink of apostacy, while they saw the way of sinners prosper, and that they *who hate God were exalted.* How then can unenlightened reason draw such inferences as these learned men pretend? Although I have a great veneration for these learned men; yet if it would not appear presumptuous in one so far below in all respects, to censure his superiors, I would take the liberty to say, that in this matter they are guilty of a double mistake: First, In that they measure men's abilities by a wrong standard. What such men as they may trace by reason, many men are under not only a moral, but even a natural incapacity to discover. It is certain, besides that vast difference which is in the capacities of men, from different education and circumstances, whence it is morally impossible for one who wants that education, and other occasions and advantages which another has, to go that same length and trace those discoveries, which the other who had education and occasion may do: there is likewise vast difference even in the natural abilities of men (whether that arises from their bodies or souls I dispute not now, nor is it to the purpose; for if from either it is still natural) so that one has not a natural capacity to trace the truths that others may, who have better natural abilities: and so it is naturally impossible for the former to make the discoveries which the other may. And I fear not to add, that if any such inferences may be drawn from these premises, as those learned persons pretend, yet many are under a natural impossibility; and the most under insuperable moral incapacity of tracing those discoveries. And if it be allowed that any man, without his own fault, is under an incapacity of making such deductions, about the placability of God, from these dispensations of providence, which I think cannot modestly be denied, the whole plea about placability will prove not only unserviceable to the Deists, but, if I mistake it not, unmeet to maintain that station for which it is designed, in the hypothesis of the learned asserters of this opinion. Another mistake I think those persons guilty of, is, that men whose minds are not enlightened by revelation, may possibly trace those discoveries, which they who are guided by it may read in the book of nature. 4. I add, if these things whereon they insist, as discoveries of this placability in God, serve to raise any suspicions of that sort in the minds of men, and this is the most that can be reasonably pretended, for demonstration they do not amount unto, they are quite sunk by the contrary evidences of God's severity; which must have so much of force, in as much as they most commonly befall the most virtuous, which heightens the suspicion.

And besides, as we heard Amyrald observe, the minds of sinners, who are convinced in any measure of sin, who are yet the only persons that will think themselves concerned in this matter, are much more inclined to entertain suspicions than good thoughts of him, whom they have offended, and who, as their consciences assure them, hates their offences. 5. That which puts the copestone upon our misery, and concludes us under darkness, is that nature's light has no help to guide us over the difficulties laid in our way, from any known instances of any persons led to repentance by these means, or pardoned on their repentance. So that upon the whole, I cannot see sufficient evidence of this placability in the light of nature.

12. If it is alledged here, that if God had no design of mercy in sparing the world, it is perfectly unintelligible why he did it. In answer to this, it is to be observed, that we did not say that God had no design of mercy in sparing the world, but that this his forbearance of the world is not a sufficient proof and evidence of this design; and that nature's light can give no satisfying account of the reason of this dispensation of God. So dark was this to such as had no other light but that of reason, that the most part laid aside thoughts of it as a thing above their reach; and the more thoughtful knew not what judgment to make, but were confounded and perplexed in their thoughts. They understood not what account was to be made of God's producing so many successive generations of men, and tossing them betwixt love and hatred, hope and fear, by such a strange mixture of good and evil—effects of his bounty and evidences of his anger. Yea so far were they confounded, that some of them came the length to set God aside from the government of the world. No less a person than Seneca introduces God, telling good men, "That he could not help their calamities." And Pliny accuses God, under the notion of *nature*, of no good design, "*Naturam, quasi mag-*
"*na & sæva mercede contra tanta sua munera usum; ita ut non*
"*satis sit æstimare, parens melior homini, an tristior noverca*
"*fuerit;*" *id est*, Nature has so cruelly counterbalanced its largest "gifts with horrible evils, that it is hard to say, whether it is not "a sad or cruel step-mother rather than a kind parent to man." So that in fact, men were thus spared and left in this dark condition, as to the reasons of God's dispensations, is evident from experience. The reasons of this conduct are to be sought in the depth of the wisdom and sovereign justice of God. Christians who are sound in the faith, will own, that all who belonged to the election of grace could not have come into being, if the world had not been thus spared. They will own that the world could not have been preserved in any order, without these effects both of bounty and severity, whereby some restraint was put on the lusts

of men, and some government kept up among them, and they were kept from running to such a height in sin, as would have made it impossible for God, with any consistency to his justice, holiness or wisdom to have preserved the world, till his design in its preservation was reached. And it may be said further, for the satisfaction of Christians (for the deists have no concern in this account, which is bottomed on the revelation they deny) that if God had seen meet to make all that belonged to Adam's covenant at once, they could not have refused to consent to the placing their happiness on that bottom whereon he placed it in the transaction with Adam, and could not have condemned God for executing the sentence upon all immediately upon the breach of it. And therefore I think they have no reason to quarrel at God's keeping them out of hell for a while. Further, God in his wisdom, by leaving so many in this dark case for so many ages, has let them see the shortness of their wisdom to disentangle them from that misery, whereunto by sin they were involved. It was *in the wisdom of God*, that *the world by wisdom knew not God.* Finally, this should make us welcome the gospel, which only can dispel the darkness we are under, as to the whole state of matters betwixt God and us, and lead us to life and immortality, and mercy, pardoning mercy, which the dim light of nature could never discover to us.

Now if we consider what has been above discoursed, it will be found that we have made considerable advances towards a decision of that which is in debate.

We have cleared what that repentence is, which with any shew of reason can be pretended available in the present case.

We have evinced that the placability of God, of which some talk, were it discoverable by nature's light, is not sufficient to bring men to this repentance.

Further, we have made it appear, that the evidences of this placability brought from nature's light are not conclusive.

But were all this given up, which we see no cause to do, the principal point is still behind, viz. " Whether nature's light can " ascertain us that all penitent sinners shall be pardoned upon " their repentance." This the deists maintain, and we deny. Their assertion, " that the light of nature assures us that penitent " sinners upon their repentance shall assuredly be forgiven," is that which we shall next take under consideration, and demonstrate to be groundles, false and absurd, by the ensuing arguments.

1. I reason against it from the nature of pardon. Forgiveness or pardon is a free act of God's will. It is a freeing of the sinner from the obligation he lies under to punishment, by virtue of the penal sanction of that righteous and just law which he has violated. All divine laws are unquestionably equal, just and

righteous, and their penal sanctions are so too. Certainly therefore God may justly inflict the punishment contained in the sanction of the law upon the transgressors; and consequently, we may without fear infer, that to relieve him from that penalty is a most free act, to which God was not necessarily obliged. And indeed, though all this had not been said, the thing is in itself clear; for we can frame no other notion of forgiveness than this, "That it is a voluntary and free act of grace, which remits the punishment, and looses the sinner from that punishment he justly deserved, and which the lawgiver might justly have inflicted on him." Now this being clear, we infer, that such acts cannot be known otherwise than, either by revelation, that is God's declaring himself expressly to this purpose, or by the deed itself, some positive act of forgiveness, which is the effect of such a purpose. The deists disown and deny any revelation. And for any effect declarative of such a purpose, we shall challenge the world to produce it. There never was, nor is any one person, of whom we can certainly affirm, upon the information of nature's light, that God has forgiven him, either upon repentance or without. And if there were such persons, it would not bear the weight of a general conclusion, that because God has done it to them, therefore he will do it to all, in all other instances.

2. I reason against this supposed constitution from the extent of it, that God will pardon all penitent sinners. If this is not said, he pardons none upon their penitence: for if any penitent sinner can be supposed to remain unpardoned, why may not all? Besides, if a penitent sinner is punished, then it must be upon somewhat else than penitence, that he who is pardoned obtains remission. For if mere penitence had been sufficient, a penitent could not have suffered. Now if all penitent sinners are forgiven, and nature's light assures them that they shall be forgiven, then the extent of this constitution is very large. For, 1. It makes void the penal sanction of the law as to all sins, however atrocious they are, if the sinner is only a penitent. 2. It extends to all ages, places, and generations of men, that ever have been, or shall be in the world. 3. It reaches to all sorts of persons, even those who are in a capacity to introduce the greatest disorders in the government of the world, as well as in the meanest offenders. Well then, the deists must maintain that it is thus enacted, and this act or constitution is in all this extent publicly declared by the light of nature, so that all may know it. 4. It reaches to all sins, past, present, and to come; they shall all be forgiven, if the sinner does only repent. Now against such an extensive constitution, we offer the following considerations:

(1.) All wise governors, who have any regard to the honor of their laws, authority, and governments, use to be very sparing in

indemnifying transgression. And no wonder they should; for wise and just rulers are not wont to enact penalties, but in proportion to offences. And therefore a passing easily from them tends to make transgression cheap, and to weaken the constitution, and so dissolve the government. Now God is no less tender of the honour of those laws, which enact nothing but what is the transcript of his own righteous nature, and the opposite whereof he has the deepest abhorrency of, as contrary to the same. And can we then reasonably suppose him to be so lavish of forgiveness as to establish it in so strange an extent? I believe it will be hard for any thinking man to judge so.

(2.) In all well ordered governments pardon is a particular act of grace, restricted to some time, place and person; yea and crimes to: and therefore is never extended so universally as here it is, and if it is to the purpose, must be asserted. So that the common reason of mankind declares against such a constitution; for what is or may be pretended of impenitent sinners being excluded, is in very deed, no restriction of the law indemnifying transgressors of whatever sort, that are but willing to be indemnified. For impenitent sinners are they only who have no will to be pardoned, or who will not accept of favor. Now to indemnify all that are willing to be pardoned is very odd constitution. And before I ascribe this to the wisdom of the great Ruler of the world, I must see better reasons than I am ever likely to see in this case.

(3.) No wise government ever enacted pardon of such an universal extent, without further security for the honor of the government, into a perpetual and standing law. Pardon and acts of grace are a part of the sovereignty of the governor: and however he may make them very extensive sometimes; yet he always reserves it so in his own power, that it shall afterwards be voluntary and free to him to forgive or not as he shall see cause.

(4.) Such a constitution is especially irreconcileable with wisdom and equity, if it is extended to transgressions not yet committed; for in that case it looks like an invitation to sin.

(5.) And this binds more strongly, if the persons are strongly inclined to sin.

(6.) More especially such a constitution is never to be reconciled with wisdom, if it is universally made known and published without any provision made for the securing of the honor of the law, against any abuse of such grace. Now I desire to know if nature's light discovers such an act and declaration of grace. Where is there any care taken, or any provisos inserted in the declaration that can evidence the regard which God has for his laws, and secure against the abuse of such kindness? Indeed the scripture discovery of mercy to penitent sinners, on account of Christ's satisfaction, fully removes all those difficulties which otherwise,

so far as I can see, are never to be removed: And therefore I can never see how such a declaration could be made without the concomitant discovery of a satisfaction to justice, and reparation of the honor of the law-giver and law, and security against abuse of grace. Remarkable to this purpose are the words of the learned and judicious Dr. How: "That prince would certainly never "be so much magnified for his clemency and mercy, as he would "be despised by all the world, for most remarkable defects of "government, that should not only pardon whosoever of his sub-"jects had offended him, upon their being sorry for it; but go "about to provide, that a law should obtain in his dominions, thro' "all after time, that whosoever should offend against the govern-"ment, with whatsoever insolency, malignity and frequency, if "they repented they should never be punished, but be taken "forthwith into highest favor. Admit that it had been congruous "to the wisdom and righteousness of God, as well as his goodness, "to have pardoned a particular sinner, upon repentance, without "satisfaction; yet nothing could have been more apparently un-"becoming him, than to settle an universal law for all future time, "to that purpose, that let as many as would, in any age to the "world's end, affront him never so highly, invade his rights, tramp-"ple on his authority, and tear the constitution of his govern-"ment, they should, upon their repentance, be forgiven, and not "only not be punished, but be most highly advanced, and dignifi-"ed." Thus far he. In the subsequent paragraph he learnedly and judiciously shews the difference in the gospel proposal of mercy to offenders, from this supposed case of forgiveness without satisfaction.

3. I inquire, whether is it possible that there may be any crime so atrocious, that it may be possible for God, in a congruity with his perfection, to punish, notwithstanding of the intervention of repentance? If there may be any such, then certainly it is not merely on account of repentance that sin is pardoned: and so a penitent cannot always be sure of forgiveness. Further, considering how grievous and sinful every transgression of God's law is, how can I be sure what sins are pardonable upon repentance and what not? If it is not possible for God to punish any penitent, then 1. I would inquire what so great matter is there in repentance, that can bind God up from vindicating his honor against affronts already offered? 2. To what purpose was the penal sanction since, in the case it was designed? For when the law is transgressed, it may not possibly take place but the execution is inconsistent with the nature of God. 3. How will this impossibility ever be proven? Repentance hath nothing in it so great to infer it: for in repentance no more can be alledged but a return to duty antecedently due. And as to this, we are unprofitable servants. And Christ

has told us what reason tells us also, that we deserve no thanks for it. And as for the other part, sorrow for by-gones, it is the necessary result of that regard to the Deity, and knowledge of our own sin, that is likewise our own duty. Now what is there, in all this, that should be supposed to be of so great worth, that it must inevitably stop the course of justice?

But here it may be objected, not only by Deists, but some, who are very far from favoring them, "That God cannot cast away "from his love and felicity any soul, which truly loveth him, "above all, and which so repenteth of his sin, as to return to "God in holiness in heart and life."*

I answer, 1. The supposition that a sinner convinced of sin can repent without some security given as to pardon, can love God above all, and so repent, as to turn to holiness in heart and life, appears to me impossible. Much less is it possible that an unconvinced sinner can repent. The reason is plain, a clear conviction of sin inevitably lays us under the deepest fear of God, and dread of punishment from him, which not only casts out that love, but draws on hatred, or at least, strong aversion; as we heard the learned Amyrald well observe in the words before quoted. Now it is certain, that suppose one impossibility, twenty will follow.—2, If the thing is not impossible, which I think it is, yet certainly it is a case that never happened, and is never likely to happen.—3. Supposing it possible, it is a very bold assertion, that no crime, how atrocious soever, would justify the inflicting of the penalty contained in the righteous sanction of the law. 4. Much less then is it hard to suppose that it would justify God's denying any reward to the sinner, that he has so sinned. And if it is granted that penitence does not necessarily restore to a prospect of reward, all religion and encouragement to it is lost. I cannot forbear quoting again the accurate and judicious Dr. How's words, who after he has shown that our offences against God incomparably transcend the measure of any offence that can be done by one creature against another, presently subjoins, "Yea, and as it can never be "thought congruous, that such an offence against a human govern- "or, should be pardoned, without the intervening repentance of "the delinquent; so we may easily apprehend also the case to be "such, as that it cannot be fit, it should be pardoned on that "alone, without other recompence:"† whereof if any should doubt, I would demand, is it, in any case, fit, that a penitent delinquent against human laws and government should be punished, or a proportionable recompence be exacted for his offence notwithstanding? Surely it will be acknowledged ordinarily fit; and

* Baxter's Reasons of Christ. Relig. Part 1. page 184, 188.
† Living Temple, Part 2. page 240.

who would take upon him to be the censor of the common justice of the world in all such cases! Or to condemn the proceedings of all times and nations, wheresoever a penitent offender hath been made to suffer the legal punishment of his offence, notwithstanding his repentance? How strange a maxim of government would that be, that it is never fit that an offender, of whatsoever kind, should be punished, if he repent himself of his offence! And surely, if ever, in any case, somewhat else than repentance be fitly insisted on as a recompence, for the violation of the sacred rights of government, it may well be supposed much more so in the case of man's common delinquency and revolt from God.

4. I reason against this position, from the consideration of the imperfection of this repentance, which, as it takes place amongst sinful men, is guilty of a double imperfection. Our sorrow and our return are imperfect, in respect of degrees. Our relation to God and his to us requires the highest, the most perfect love and the most cordial obedience. No less will answer our obligations. And our sorrow, if it is required, must be supposed likewise to be such as results necessarily from such a love. Now what can be more evident than this, that none of the children of men love God as they ought, and with that intention and vehemency, which answers their original obligation? And consequently their sorrow and obedience can never come up to it: for they being the result of this love, can never go beyond the principle, which influences them. Again, our return is liable to another imperfection, even a frequent interruption. The case is not thus, that we only once, through infirmity, make an escape; but even after our supposed return, it must be allowed that there will be after-deviations. And hence it becomes a question, how can we expect acceptance in our returns? How can our repentance, which answers not the demands of the law, and our ties to duty be accepted for itself? And if so, much more may it be a question, how can it be allowed sufficient to atone for other transgressions, yea, how can it be sufficient to atone for transgressions, which it takes no notice of? For there are such sins as by the light of nature we are never likely to reach the conviction of; and therefore it is impossible we should sorrow for them, or repent of them? However men may please themselves with a fancy of the sufficiency of their repentance; yet a sinner, that understands his own case, will never be able to satisfy his own conscience in this matter.

I know it is pleaded, "That we have a harder province to admin-
"ister than even the angels themselves; they not having so gross
"a body as we have, nor exposed to so much evil as we are. But
"God knoweth our frame, and upon that account is not ex-
"treme to mark what is done amiss. A creature, as a creature, is
"finite and fallible: and yet we are not the most perfect of God's

" creation. Now, for fallible to fail, is no more than for frail to be " broken; and mortal to die. Where there is finite and limited " perfection there is not only a possibility, but a contingency to " fail, to err, to be mistaken, not to know and to be deceived. " And where the agent is such, there is place for repentance.— " Repentance is that which makes a finite being failing, capable of " compassion. If repentance did not take effect, it would be too " hazardous for a creature to come into being. If upon a lapse, " an error, or mistake, we should be undone to eternity, without " all hope of recovery; who would willingly enter upon this state?"* Thus speaks Dr. Whichcote.

To this plausible discourse we answer, Either this reasoning proceeds upon the state of things, according to the covenant of grace, and respects them who have laid hold on it, or it does not. If it does proceed on this footing, we say it helps not the Deists: but if, as it seems, it be extended further, then I shall make the following remarks on it. 1. Although we have here many things prettily said, yet I cannot but deeply dislike the discourse, because it aims at the extenuation of sin, and pleads its excuse from our frailty. Now, besides that this bears hard upon the author of our constitution, as if he had made it unequal to the laws he imposed on it, it is a foolish argument, because the case may be as much exaggerated on the other hand by the representing the greatness of the law-giver, the equality of the laws, and the ability of man, at least in his first make to obey. And the one will not signify more to give us hope of forgiveness on our repentance, than the other will to make us despair of it. 2. It seems to reflect on God's different conduct with the angels that sinned, who had no place allowed them for repentance: for their frame was finite, and so, frail and failable. The little difference from the grossness of our bodies, if man is not supposed corrupt, and his body inclined to evil, makes no difference that can satisfy; for still we were under no necessity of sinning from our constitution, if it is not supposed to be corrupt. But to pretend that man was made corrupt, carries our frailty too far, to make it God's deed. We cannot plead in excuse, any defects in our constitution, that God put not there. 3. It condemns all human laws that spares not penitent transgressors. If it be said, that they are under a necessity to do it; I answer, whence does this necessity arise? Is the honor of the divine law less dear to him, and of less consideration than the honor and rights of human constitutions and governments? But further, I desire to know, will necessity justify the punishment of the penitent? If not, then here it doth not justify: if it doth, who will assure me that there is not

* Dr. Whichcote's select Sermons, Part 2. Sermon 2nd, on Acts xiii. 38. page 322. 323.

as great a necessity for this course in divine as human governments; at least in some instances? And if in any instance the punishment of a penitent may take place, who will condescend to tell where it may, and where not? How likewise can it be said that penitence secures pardon? Further, 4. I say directly to the argument, if divine laws are as much adjusted to man's power, as the constitutions and laws of human governments are, (and that they behoved to be so, with respect to his power in his first constitution has been made appear) then it is no more hazardous to come into being, than to enter into human society, where frail man may, for a word or a deed, forfeit his own life to justice and all the advantages of it, and beggar his posterity, and that without any prospect of relief by his repentance. If it be said, that the punishments are greater in this case; I grant it: so are the laws too, and consequently the transgressions; and so likewise are the advantages of obedience; and without an injurious reflection on God, it cannot be denied that the laws are, as well at least, attempered to man's abilities wherewith he was created and subjected to them. 5. I do not see how it can be injustice to inflict a just punishment upon transgressors, and such of necessity, that is, which is included in the sanction of the divine laws. Nor does repentance make that execution unjust; which, without it, is allowed not only just, but indispensably necessary. This I might largely shew, but others have done it before.*

5. The falsehood of this proposition may be further evidenced from the nature of the justice of God, that seems necessarily to require that sin be punished. For clearing this, I shall make the ensuing observations: in doing which we shall aim at such a gradual progression as may set the matter in the best light.

(1.) Justice strictly taken, is "that virtue of the rational nature, whose business it is to preserve, maintain, and be a guardian of the rights of rational beings." It is commonly defined, a "constant and abiding or fixed will of giving to every one what is their right or due." Whence it has been debated, whether in man there is any such thing as self-justice; because, according to this account of justice, it seems to be restricted to the rights of others. And this restriction has countenance given to it from that common maxim, that *volenti non fit injuria*,† which is founded in this, that a man is supposed capable of parting, without wrong, with his own rights, and consequently is not capable of injustice towards himself. It is true, man has no rights, which he may not deprive himself of by his own consent. Yet since man has such rights, though they are but derived ones, as also his being is, as he cannot

* See Specimen Refutationis Grellii, page 100, 101, & sequ.

† "No injury is done to one who is willing."

deprive himself of without fault, I see not but even such a thing as self-justice may take place among men: but whatever the case be as to men, there is certainly in God to be allowed such a thing as self-justice. For clearing of which I observe,

(2.) That God, being the fountain of all rights, has certainly rights, which he can by no means deprive himself of. He has a right of dominion over the creature, and to the creature's subjection, that he cannot part with. As long as there is a rational creature it is, by its being, inevitably subject to its Creator, and he cannot part with that right he has to govern it. "With the su-"preme Proprietor, there cannot but be unalienable rights, inse-"parably and everlastingly inherent in him: for it cannot be, but "that he, who is the fountain of all rights must have them pri-"marily and originally in himself; and can no more so quit them, "as to make the creature absolute and independent, than he can "make the creature God."* Hence inevitably there must be allowed self-justice, which is nothing else, save that fixed determination of the divine will, not to part with what is his own unalienable right, and consequently to maintain it.

(3.) This justice, in order to maintain God's right of government, obliges him to enact penal laws as the measure of the creature's subjection and obedience. A subject cannot be without laws.—And where the creature is capable of transgressing, laws cannot be such without penalties. Without these, they were rather counsels or advices, than laws; and the person to whom they are given is left at will to be subject to them or not. And if God should thus leave the creature without a penalty, then upon transgression, the transgressor has slipt entirely out under the dominion of God; for he is not actively, in that instance, subject to God. And neither is he passively subject, if there is no penalty. So that by this means God has forfeited or lost his right, which is impossible. There is no other imaginable tie of subjection, but either the precept or the penal sanction of the law, whereby rational creatures, as to their moral dependence can be bound. Now if God part with the one, by remitting the penalty, or enacting laws without it, and man cast off the other by disobedience, the creature is, at least thus far, independent. Which, how absurd it is, it is easy to see. Wherefore, in case the creature is made, we cannot but suppose a law must be made to it. And if the creature is capable of violating that law, there must, for preserving that right, which God has to the creature's subjection, be a penalty annexed to that law. Whence it seems evident, "that God did owe it to himself "primarily, as the absolute Sovereign and Lord of all, not to suf-

* Living Temple, Part 2. page 270.

"fer indignities to be offered him, without animadverting upon "them, and therefore to determine he would do so."*

(4.) The creature being made, justice requires that it should be under such a law as is enacted with a penalty, and such a law being now enacted, there seems to arise a double necessity for the execution of the law, in case of transgression. The one arising from the reason of the law, the other from the law itself: Since upon the grounds already laid down, the law was necessary; the same grounds enforce the execution of the law: for when the case falls out, for which the law was provided, it is not merely the law or constitution itself, but the execution of it that secures the end. When the creature disobeys, he has in so far renounced an actual dependence on, and subjection to the law-giver and law: and therefore it seems of necessity that either as to these actions he is not subject, or he must be subject to the penalty. Again, as the reason of the law enforces the execution, so does the law itself. For the law being once made, justice requires that its honor be secured either by obedience, or by the subjection of the transgressor to the punishment.

(5.) To proceed yet further, if the law is not executed, the design, even the principal design of punishment in this case, is not reached. It is not the only or main design of punishment or penal sanctions to reclaim the offender, or benefit by-standers, or secure the community. It is true, the penal sanction, or law enacting the penalty, is of use to deter from transgressing, and so is of use to the community, and all under the government; but the execution, if the sanction is punishment after this life, is of no advantage to the offender, nor is it instructive to by-standers, or the rest of the community, who do not see it: wherefore these are not the principal ends of punishment. Though it is to be observed, that any public intimation that the penalty shall not be inflicted, could not but be of the worst consequence to the community, as rendering it vain as to all that use, which it has of deterring persons who are under the law from sin. Yet I say, these are not the principal ends of punishment; but the satisfaction of the law-giver. For the case is not here, as it is in human governments, where the governors and government are both constituted for the good of the governed, which therefore must be the chief aim of all laws: but on the contrary, the governed are made, and the laws made, and penalties enacted for the Governor, who made all things for himself. And consequently, the principal design of punishment is the securing and vindicating his honor in the government. Nor is this any such thing as answers to private revenge amongst men. "But that wherewith we must suppose the blessed God to be

* Living Temple, page 271.

" pleased in the matter of punishing, is the congruity of the thing " itself, that the sacred rights of his government over the world " be vindicated, and that it be understood how ill his nature can " comport with any thing that is impure, and what is in itself so " highly incongruous, cannot but be the matter of his detestation. " He takes eternal pleasure in the reasonableness and fitness of his " own determinations and actions; and rejoices in the works of " his own hands, as agreeing with the apt, eternal schemes and " models, which he hath conceived in his own most wise and all- " comprehending mind: so that though he desireth not the *death* " *of sinners*, and hath *no delight* in the *sufferings* of his afflicted " creatures, which his immense goodness rather inclines him to " behold with compassion; yet the true ends of punishment are " so much a greater good, than their ease and exemption from the " sufferings they had deserved, that they must rather be chosen, " and cannot be eligible for any other reason, but for that which also " they are to be delighted in, *i. e.* a real goodness, and conducible- " ness to a valuable end inherent in them."

(6.) As justice in a strict sense, of which hitherto we have spoken, as it denotes that rectitude of the divine nature, which is conversant about, and conservative of the divine rights, pleads for penal laws and punishment; so likewise justice in a large sense, as it comprehends all his moral perfections, holiness, wisdom, faithfulness, &c. and answers to that which is amongst men called universal justice, pleads for the same: for so taken, it comprehends his holiness and perfect detestation of all impurity; in respect whereof he cannot but be perpetually inclined to animadvert with severity upon sin; both because of its irreconcileable contrariety to his holy nature, and the insolent affront, which it therefore directly offers him; and because of the implicit and most injurious misrepresentation of him which it contains in it, as if he were either kindly or more indifferently affected towards it: upon which accounts, we may well suppose him to esteem it necessary for him, both to constitute a rule for punishing it, and to punish it accordingly; that he may both truly act his own nature, and truly represent it. Again, it includes, thus taken, his governing wisdom, which requires indispensibly that he do every thing in his government so as he may appear like himself, and answerably to his own greatness; so as to secure a deep regard for his government, and all the parts of the constitution. In respect whereof, it might be shown, that the punishment of sin, or the execution of the penal laws solemnly enacted is necessary. Wisdom takes care that one attribute do not quite obscure another, and will not allow that he gratify mercy to the detriment of justice. Again, it includes his faithfulness and sincerity, which seem pledged in enacting the penalty for its execution. How is it consistent with them to enact

such severe penalties, if he may remit them without any reparation made for the wrong done? Any one that would see more to this purpose, besides others who have discoursed of Vindictive Justice, may peruse the learned Dr. How's Living Temple, Part 2. Chap. 6 and 7, who has learnedly discoursed and improven this subject: to whom we own ourselves indebted for much light in this matter.

Thus it seems evident, that whether we take the divine justice in this last and largest notion, as it is comprehensive of all the perfections of the Deity, or in the former and strict notion as it imports a virtue, whose province it is to take care of the preservation of the incommunicable rights of the Deity, and vindicate their honor; it seems necessarily to forbid the remission of sin without the punishment of the transgressor, or a reparation of the injured honor of the Deity.

If it be alleged, that by repentance the sinner returns to his subjection, and so the honor of God's government is repaired. I answer, that upon supposition of the sinner's return being a sufficient reparation of the honour of the Deity, there would indeed be no necessity of punishment: but this is the question, and the objection begs what is in question. The principles now laid down, shew that justice, however taken, must take care to preserve and vindicate God's honor in case of transgression. The penal sanction of the law tells us, that the punishment of the transgressor is that which wisdom and justice have fixed on, as proper for this end. There is no alternative, punishment or repentance. The law makes only mention of punishment. When therefore the objectors say that repentance is sufficient, we deny it.—They do not prove it, nor can they. God, to whom alone it belongs to determine what is necessary for the vindication of his own honour, must determine the reparation; we cannot. Yea, it were presumption in angels to do it. God has fixed upon punishment: if he allow of any thing else, the light of nature does not tell it. Nor is there any thing in the nature of repentance, as has been above cleared, that can induce us to think it is sufficient to this purpose. The most virtuous, who must be supposed the penitents, if there are any such, meet with as heavy punishments in this life as any, which shews, at least, that God looks not upon their penitence as satisfaction.

6. Against this proposition we reason thus: Every man is endued with a power to repent when he pleases, or he is not. To assert the latter, were to yield the cause; for it matters not to the sinner, whether repentance be a sufficient atonement or not, if it be not in his power to repent. Besides, it is a question in this case of considerable difficulty, whether it is consistent with the perfections of God to give this power, till once his honor is se-

cured by a suitable reparation for the injury done it by sin. If it is in the sinner's power to repent when he pleases, then again I insist,

Either God without impeachment of his justice may inflict the punishment contained in the sanction of the law on the sinner, notwithstanding of his repentance, or he may not. If he may, then the Deists can never without revelation be sure that he will not inflict the punishment, which is what we say: nor will it mend the matter, to say that though God, without the impeachment of his justice, may punish the repenting sinner, yet he cannot do it without injuring his mercy: for what is contrary to one of God's attributes, is so to all. And moreover, the justice of God in any particular requires that each of the divine attributes have their due.

But if it be said, that God cannot in justice punish the repenting sinner; then I desire to be satisfied, if this does not evacuate and make void the penal sanction of the law? For if every man hath a power to repent when he pleases, and this repentance stops the execution of the sentence, I do not see but any may offend without hazard.

All that can be said is, that God may surprize man in the very act of sinning, or so soon after it, that he shall not have time to repent, and so man's hazard is sufficient to deter him from sin.

But to this I answer, that the consideration of this hazard can never have much influence on man, to make him refuse the gratifying of his senses, in which he finds so much pleasure, so long as in the ordinary conduct of providence he sees that God very rarely takes that course of snatching away sinners in the very act of sin, or so soon after as to preclude repentance. It is not so much what God may do, as what he ordinarily does, that is of weight to determine men, especially when they have so strong motives to persuade them to the contrary, as the impetuous cravings of unruly lusts are known to be.

This argument gives us a clear view how much the Deist's notion of pardon upon mere repentance favours sin; and how unreasonable the outcries of Herbert and Blount, repeated *ad nauseam*, against the maintainers of satisfaction really are. They say, the doctrine of satisfaction makes sin cheap. But whether do they who say that sin cannot be pardoned without the sinner's repentance and satisfaction, or they who assert repentance alone is sufficient, make sin cheapest?

7. I further argue against this doctrine, that this constitution, grant or allowance of repentance, in case of transgression, is either co-æval with the law, and has its rise as the law hath, in the relation betwixt God and man and their natures, as being a necessary result of them; or it is a posterior establishment, and an act of free and gracious condescension in God, to which he was not neces-

sarily obliged. If this last is said, then I say, this could not be known, but by a revelation or some deed of God, expressive of his mind in this matter. The first is Denied by the deists; and we desire them to produce the work of providence whereon it is legible, that God without any reparation to his justice for the injury done him by sin, will pardon the sinner upon his penitence and admit him to bliss. For though we should admit, that some works of providence singly taken, without observing others which may have a contrary aspect, have somewhat like an intimation of a placability, which we see but little reason to do; yet we deny positively that there is any that specifies the terms, or particularly condescends on repentance, as that whereon he will be pacified and reconciled to sinners. And if any will pretend to draw this from them, I wish they would essay it, and let us see of what form their procedure will be: perhaps they may prove, that it is not consistent with God's attributes to pardon an impenitent sinner: but if they think thence to infer, that therefore it is consistent to his attributes to pardon one merely upon his penitence, they may make good the consequence if they can; they will find it harder than it appears.

If the former is said, that this constitution is co-æval with the law, and is as much a necessary result of the nature of God and man, and their mutual relation, as the law itself: besides what has been said to demonstrate the folly of it, let these three things be considered:

(1.) The deists do, and are obliged to say, that man is not now from his birth more corrupt than he was at first.

(2.) Man at his original was, and consequently according to them, still is endued with power sufficient perfectly to know and obey the law he is subjected to. To say that he was subjected to a law, which he was not able to know or obey, is to accuse the Deity of folly and injustice; as has been made appear.

(3.) The law to which man is subjected, is exactly suited to God's great design, his own glory and man's happiness.

These being granted, I conceive it evident, 1. That nothing can be said more injurious to the glorious perfections of God, than that any of them gives ground of hopes, far less assurance of impunity to man, if he break these laws, which are equally suited to promote God's glory and his own good, and which he wanted neither power to know nor obey. 2. Such a grant would be of no less dangerous consequence to man, because it could be of no other use, than to attempt a violation of those laws, which it is so much his interest to obey.

But some may say, it would be discouraging to man to think he were undone, if he disobeyed in the least. I answer, this could

be no reasonable discouragement if he was possessed of power perfectly to know and obey the law he was subjected to.

Again, it may be said, that it was necessary there should be such an encourgement to man; because, though he was entrusted with sufficient power to know and obey the law of God; yet he was for trial exposed to a great many strong and forcible temptations to disobedience.

For answer to this; suppose two men equally able to know and obey the law; the one knows he may obtain pardon on repentance, the other believes himself irrecoverably lost if he transgress; I desire the objector, on supposition that both were attacked with a temptation equally strong, to answer me seriously, 1. Which of those two would in all probability soonest yield; he that saw a probability of escape or he that saw none? 2. Since the keeping of the law was highly advantageous to both, which of the two is in the best state; he who has this strong motive to obedience, that he is ruined if he disobey, or he that hath this encouragement and enforcement of the temptation to disobedience, that he may disobey and escape? Nor will they evade by saying, that this constitution was knowable before, but was not taken notice of till sin fell out: for if it might be known, all the inconveniences mentioned will follow. Besides, if it was taken notice of after the first sin, it might be a temptation to all succeeding transgressions.

In fine, if this allowance of repentance be said to have the same rise with the law, and be equally necessary from the nature of God and man and their mutual relation; it is a plain dispensation with the law, and that equally made public, being notified in the same way as the law is; which way it is consistent with the wisdom, holiness and justice of God, I know not.

8. To add no more on this head, if this story about the sufficiency of repentance lies so open to the light of nature, whence was it that it was so little discerned? The name of it, in the sense and to that use we now speak of, scarce occurs among the ancients, if we may believe Herbert, who read them all with great diligence, and with a design to find what was for his purpose. Speaking of their sins, he says: "*Neque igitur mihi dubium est, "quin eorum pœnituerit Gentiles, quæ tot mala asciverunt, licet "rarius quidem pœnitentiæ verbum inter authores, eo, quo jam "usurpatur sensu, reperiatur.*"* Why does not he doubt of it? The reason, he goes on, is, because they used sacrifices. But I suppose for this very reason some do doubt if they thought repentance sufficient: but of this more by and by. The philoso-

* Herbert de Relig. Gentil. page 198.—"Nor is it therefore a doubt with "me, that the Gentiles repented of those crimes which brought so many "evils upon them, although the word repentance, in that sense which it is "now used, seldom occurs in their authors."

phers neither taught nor practised it. It is true, Periander one of the wise men of Greece, had this for his saying: Αμαρτῶν, μετανόησον, "Repent of thy sins;" that is, possibly, leave them off. For who can tell us whether he had a right notion of repentance, or of what avail he thought it? Seneca says, *Quem pœnitet pecasse pene est innocens.*† This is spoken with his usual pride that made him think little of sin. But where is the person that taught repentance, or offered to evince it sufficient to atone the Deity? Most of them contemptuously disregarded it. We find nothing like it in their best moralist's practice: but on the contrary, they were so puffed up with their virtues, that they made no account of their sins. The priests taught not this doctrine, for they inculcated sacrifices as necessary to atone the Deity. And if we may believe no incompetent judge, both priests and people were persuaded that repentance is not sufficient to atone the Deity. It is Cæsar who tells us, that, "*Pro vita hominis nisi vita* "*hominis reddatur non posse deorum immortalium numen placa-* "*ri arbitrantur Galli.*"‡ To which we might add many more testimonies to the same purpose. Nor do we find any thing like this discovery among them; which is very strange in a matter of importance, if it was so clearly revealed. That which is most like what they would be at, is what we find in Ovid:

Sæpe levant pœnas, ereptaque lumina reddunt
Quem bene peccati pœnituisse vides. Et alibi,
Quamvis est igitur meritis indebita nostris,
Magna tamen spes est in bonitate Dei.*

But this is nothing to the purpose: how many of the poets' notions, and particularly this one, were traditional? How evidently were their notions of all things about the gods suited to their own fabulous stories of the clemency of the gods. And besides, we have no assurance that he understood what we do by repentance. Nor indeed could he. But more of this anon.

Objections Considered.

IT remains now that we take notice of some considerable objections that are made against what hitherto has been discoursed by different persons, on different views and principles.

† "He who repents of having sinned is almost innocent."

‡ Cæsar de Bello Gal. Lib. 6. See Outramus de Sacrificiis, Lib. 1. Cap. 22. "The Gauls are of opinion that the Majesty of the immortal gods cannot be "appeased unless the life of a man be given for the life of man."

* De Ponto Lib. 1. Eleg. 1. 7.—"You see that he who duly repents of his "offence, often alleviates his punishment, and recovers his lost light.—Al-"though therefore it is not due to our merits, yet there is great hope in the "goodness of God."

I. Say some, if the case is so apparent *that all have sinned*, and the relief is so hid, that nature's light could not discern it; whence is it that all men run not to despair and take sanctuary here? Whence is it that religious worship was universally continued in the world? Yea, whence is it that such a worship universally obtained, that seems founded on the supposition of a placable God?

To this specious argument we answer, that many things there are in nature, whereof we can give no satisfying account. And if there should prove something in morality too, not to be accounted for, it were not to be wondered at. But not to insist on this, I answer directly. A fair account may be given of this otherwise than by admitting what we have overthrown upon so many clear arguments. Towards which, we shall make the following attempt: 1. The natural notices of a Deity, that are inlaid in the minds of men, strongly prompted them to worship some one or other. From this natural obligation they could not shake themselves loose. 2. Their ignorance and darkness as to the real horror of the case, made them think little of sin, and consequently apprehend that it would not prove such an obstruction to acceptance, as really they had reason to apprehend it was. 3. All who allow of revelation, own that the revelation of forgiveness, as well as the means of obtaining it, was twice universal in the days of Adam and Noah. 4. Though this revelation was in so far lost by the generality of mankind, that it could not be useful to its proper end, yet somewhat of it still remained in the world, and spread itself with mankind. 5. All sorts of men found their interest and account in keeping it up. The priests who engrossed the advantage of the religion of the world, found their gain in it. The politicians who aimed at the good of society, found it useful to their purpose. The poets who aimed at pleasing, found it capable of tickling the ears of a world involved in sin. And the people whose consciences were harrassed with guilt of atrocious crimes, found some sort of relief. And what all found some benefit by, was not likely quite to be lost. The philosophers seeing the strait of the case, saw that they could not make a better of it and so acquiesced. 6. Their profane conceptions of the deities, as if they were persons that allowed or practised their evils, did help forward. The gods which their own fancy had framed, they could cast into what mould they pleased, as it best suited their interest or inclinations. 7. Satan, who acted a very visible part among them, and bore sway without controul, no doubt had a deep hand in the matter, and could variously revive, alter and manage the tradition, natural notices and interests of men, so as to make his own advantage of them. Other things might be added, shewing the concernment of the holy God in this matter, which I shall wave for some reasons that are satisfying to myself. But what is said, I conceive sufficient to blunt

the edge of the objection. I shall only subjoin the words of the learned Amyrald, who after he has owned the natural discoveries of placability; but withal shown their uselessness, and that they had no influence nor could have, in the words formerly quoted, at length he moves this same objection that we have here proposed, and returns the answer, which we shall now transcribe, though it is somewhat long, the rather because it comes from a person not only of great learning, but one who owned placability might be demonstrated by the light of nature, and yet denies that it was the foundation of the religion that was to be found in the world. "But perhaps (says he) it will here be demanded, whence then "came it to pass that all nations have each of them had its reli- "gion? And why are not all men dissociated instead of hanging "together in religious society? To which I answer, that the "mind of man is never agitated with the same emotions, nor con- "stant in the same thoughts; the same passion not always pos- "sessing him, nor the same vice. They take their turns, or suc- "ceed and mingle one with another. Two things therefore have hin- "dered that men, though possessed with fear, have not abandoned "all service of the Deity—profaneness and pride: God permitting "the profaneness of some and the presumption of others to tem- "per the terror of conscience. First, profaneness; because not "weighing sufficiently how much God abominates vice, and how "inexorable his justice is, they often have flattered themselves "with this thought, that he scarce takes any notice of small of- "fences, and such as are in the intention and purpose only, that "is, in the affections of the will and not in actions really execut- "ed. Moreover, they thought he was not much incensed, but with "crimes that turn to some notable detriment to the common- "wealth, or carry some blot of infamous improbity. Although "masculine lust was either justified or excused, or tolerated by "the most civilized people of Greece. And they were some- "times so besotted in their devotions, that they thought not but "crimes of the greatest turpitude with no great difficulty might "be expiated by their sacrifices, lustrations, religious processions, "mysteries and bacchanal solemnities. On the other side, pre- "sumption; because not sufficiently acknowledging how much "they owed to the Deity, they imagined that their good works, "their offerings, and the exercise of that shadow of virtue, which "they pursued, might countervail the offences they committed: "so that were they balanced together, there might be hope not "only to avoid punishment, but moreover to obtain recompence. "Upon which ground it was that Socrates being near his end, "and discoursing of the immortality of the soul, speaks largely of "his hope, (in case the soul be not extinguished with the body) "to go and live with Hercules and Palamedes, and the other per-

"sons of high account. But as to asking God pardon of the "offences he had committed, he makes no mention at all of it; "because though he spoke always dissemblingly of himself, he "had in the bottom of his soul great opinion of his own virtue, "and made no great reckoning of his vices, from which notwith- "standing he was no more exempt than others. And had his life "been of such purity, that the eyes of men could not discern a "blot in it (although some have written infamous matters of him) "yet when the account is to be made up with God, there needs "another perfection of virtue than that of his to satisfy so exact "a justice. But yet further, oftentimes these two vices of pro- "faneness and presumption have met together in the same sub- "ject, and lulled men with vain hopes into absolute supinity. "Whence the excess of fear hath been retrenched, which would "otherwise have at last turned into despair, and consequently not "only dissipated all communion in religion, but likewise ruined all "human society. For fear restraining man on the one side from "absolutely contemning the Deity by profaneness, on the other "side, profaneness and presumption hindered it from precipi- "tating men into that furious despair which would have over- "thrown all, and caused more horrible agitations in the mind of "man, than ever the most outrageous Bacchides were sensible of. "So that by the mixture, vicissitude and variation of these di- "verse humours has religion been maintained in the world. But "it is easy to judge how sincere that devotion was, which was "bred of fear, (a passion that is naturally terminated in hatred) "self-presumption, and misapprehension of the justice of God. "Whereas the certain knowledge of the remission of sins, of "which the special revelation from heaven can only give us as- "sured hope, is a marvellous powerfully attractive to piety, out of "gratitude towards so inestimable a goodness."*

II. Some object against what has been proven, That God is good, compassionate and kind; and that natures of any excellency take pleasure in exercising mercy, compassion and kindness, and with difficulty are brought to acts of severity.

I answer, 1. The goodness, kindness, mercy and compassion of God are a pretty subject for men to declaim and make harangues about. But when they are made, they are little to the purpose; for they are easily answered by a representation of the justice and holiness of God. And the difficulty is not touched, unless men can shew how these seemingly jarring attributes may be consistent. 2. The inferences men must draw from such representations of the nature of God, are such as will cross the experience of mankind who want revelation, and see many effects of his bounty, goodness,

* Amyrald of Relig. Part 1. Chap. 7. page 254, 255, 256.

forbearance and patience, but none of his pardoning mercy; and many of his justice and holy severity. Wherefore we may leave this subject and proceed, though much might be said to clear how little all this is to the purpose. But we conceive this is apparent from what has been above discoursed.

III. It is said, "That the very command of God to use his appointed means for men's recovery, doth imply that it shall not be in vain; and doth not only shew a possibility, but so great a hopefulness of success to the obedient, as may encourage them cheerfully to undertake it, and carry it through.*"

In answer to this, I have above cleared, that men are still obliged to obey; that there are many things, of which several are by him mentioned in the subsequent sections of that chapter, whence these words are quoted, which might be improven to excite man to a cordial compliance, in case there were a new, clear and plain invitation to a return with hope of acceptance. And I admit, that to deny this, as he says, in the words immediately proceeding those now quoted, were to make earth a hell. Yea further, so long as men are out of hell, there is still a possibility in the case: but that there is any such invitation given, or assurance of a hopeful issue, or means directly and specially instituted by God as means of recovery, knowable by men left to the mere light of nature, I deny: because I see not the shadow, of a proof and evidence to the contrary that has been offered.

IV. It is alledged by the same author, That God's commanding us to *forgive* others, encourages us to expect *forgiveness* at his hand.

To this I say, 1. The learned person owns, "That from this "it doth not follow, that God must forgive all, which he bindeth "us to forgive, for reasons he had before expressed." 2. I say, that this, the command of God to forgive others, lies not so open to the view of nature's light, as that every one can discern it.—And besides, it admits of many exceptions, for ought that unassisted nature can discover. 3. It is restricted to private persons, and is not to be extended to public injuries done against government. 4. When it is found to be our duty by nature's light, we are brought to see it by such reasons as these, That we need the like favour at their hands, that we are frail, &c. which gives us ground to be jealous that the like is not to be expected at his hand, with whom these things have no place, which are the reason of the law to us. So that from this, as it is discoverable by nature's light, no sure inference can be drawn.

* Baxter's Reasons of Christ. Relig. Part 1. Chap. 17. § 9. page 186.

V. It is objected, That sacrifices and all the religious services amongst the Heathens, were only symbolical of a good life and repentance.*

To this I say, 1. If this were true, Herbert and the Deists are much in the wrong to the priests who urged the use of them, as men who neglected to inculcate repentance. For any thing I can see they were more commendable than the philosophers, who neither taught nor practised repentance, and vilified sacrifices. But 2. This is a scandalous falsehood; for there is nothing more evident, than that by the sacrifices they designed to atone the deities, and expected that they should be accepted in place of the offerers, and their death be admitted instead of what they had deserved themselves. See abundance of testimonies given to this by him to whom we referred, when we quoted Cæsars testimony to this purpose; I mean Outram. What, I pray, meant the custom that prevailed, not only among the Jews, but Heathens, of offering their sacrifices with solemn prayers to God, that all the plagues which they or their country had deserved, might light on the head of the victim; and so they themselves escape? And hereupon they thought that all their sins did meet upon it, and defile it to that degree, that none who had touched it dared to return home till they had washed and purified themselves. Suidas reports of the Greeks, "*Quod, ei, qui malis overruncandis quotannis destinatus erat, sic* "*imprecabantur, sis περιψημα nostrum, hoc est, salus & redemp-*" *tio. Atque ita illum in mare projiciebant, quasi Neptuno sacrum* "*persolventes.*"† Servius tells us, "Massilieness, *quoties pesti-*" *lentia laborabant, unus se ex pauperibus offerebat, alendus anno* "*integro publicis & purioribus cibis. Hic postea, ornatus verbe-*" *nis & vestibus sacris, circumducebatur per totam civitatem cum* "*execrationibus, ut in ipsum recideret mala totius civitatis; &* "*sic projiciebatur.*"‡ But we have stayed too long in rufuting this mad and ungrounded conceit.

VI. Some, to prove that the works of providence, particularly his forbearance to sinners and bounty to them, do call men to repentance without the word, urge the apostle's words, Rom. ii. 4. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and*

* See A. W. Letter, Oracles of Reason.

† "They cursed the person who was yearly appointed for averting misfor-" tunes, in this manner, "Be thou our atonement," that is, our safety and " redemption; and so they threw him into the sea, as performing a sacrifice " to Neptune."

‡ "As often as the Massilians were afflicted with the pestilence, one of " the poor offered himself, who was to be nourished for a whole year with " clean victuals, at the public expence, after which being adorned with ver-" vains and sacred garments, he was led round the whole city with execra-" tions, that the misfortunes of the whole city might fall upon him, and thus " he was cast out."

long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? To this we answer,

1. Divines, and these not a few, nor of the lowest form, do understand this whole context of the Jews; and they urge reasons for it that are not contemptible. If this opinion hold, no more can be drawn from these words, than what has been already granted without any prejudice to our cause, viz. that this dispensation, where persons are otherwise under a call to repentance, gives time to repent, and enforceth the obligation of that call they are under.

2. But to cut off all pretence of any plea from this scripture, we shall take under our consideration the apostle's whole discourse, from the 16th ver. of the 4th chap. to the 4th ver. of the 3d, and give a view of these words, and other passages insisted on to the same purpose, with a special eye to the apostle's scope in the discourse, and the particular design of every passage. And this we shall undertake, not so much out of any regard to this objection in particular, but to obviate the abuse of several passages of this discourse of the apostle, by whom we shall have just now occasion to debate almost every verse in this second chapter. If, therefore, our solution of the apostle's discourse seem a little tedious at present, this disadvantage will be compensated by the light it will contribute for clearing many of the ensuing objections.

The apostle Paul, Rom. i. 16. had asserted, that the *gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*, that is, it is the only powerful mean of salvation to persons of all sorts; neither Jew nor Greek can be saved by any other mean. In the 17th verse, he advances an argument for proof of this assertion, which is plainly this, that revelation, which exhibits *the righteousness of God*, which is the only righteousness that can please God, and on the account whereof he accepts and justifies sinners; and which exhibits *this righteousness*, not upon slender or conjectural grounds, but *from faith*, that is, upon the testimony of the *faithful God*, who can neither be deceived nor deceive us, proposes this righteousness to our faith, as the only powerful mean of salvation: but it is the *gospel* only that doth reveal this righteousness of God *from faith*, or upon the credit of divine testimony unto *faith:* therefore the gospel is the only powerful mean of God's appointment.

This is plainly the apostle's argument; and if we consider it, we will find it to comprize three assertions; 1. That the *righteousness of God* revealed in the gospel, and received by *faith*, is that, on the account whereof, sinners are accepted with and justified before God. This is one branch of his first proposition, which he designs to explain and confirm afterwards, at length. Here he only confirms it by hinting a proof of it from the prophet Habakkuk's words, *the just shall live by faith*, that is, faith receiving the

rigtheousness of God revealed in the promise, is the foundation of all the godly, their hopes of pardon, peace with God, grace to support under trials, and a merciful deliverance from them. As it is by these things they live in troublesome times, so it is the acceptance of this righteousness, that gives them any right to these advantages. 2. His first proposition implies this assertion, that this righteousness of God revealed in the gospel, is the *only* effectual mean of acceptance with and justification before God; or, that there is no other way wherein any of the children of men may obtain those advantages, save this way of accepting by faith the righteousness of God, upon the credit or faith of his testimony; this is the other branch of his first proposition. 3. The apostle asserts in this argument, that the gospel doth reveal this righteousness of God; on which, and on which only, acceptance with and justification before God are to be obtained, *from faith to faith.*— This is the apostle's assumption or second proposition.

The apostle having hinted for the present, at a sufficient proof of the first of these assertions, as has been said, passes it. He lays aside likewise the third of these assertions, designing to clear it afterwards, and addresses himself to the proof of the second in the ensuing discourse from chap. i. ver. 18. to chap. iii. ver. 20. or thereabout.

The proposition then which our apostle spends the whole context under consideration in proof of, is, " That there is no other way whereby a sinner can obtain justification before, or acceptance with God, but by faith:" Or that " neither Gentiles nor Jews can be justified before God by their own works."

This he demonstrates, First, Against the Gentiles in particular, from chap. i. ver. 18. to chap. ii. ver. 16. according to our present supposition, or concession of his adversaries. Next, he proves the same in particular against the Jews, chap. ii. to ver. 8. of chap. iii. And from thence to the close of his discourse he demonstrates the same in general against all mankind whether Jews or Gentiles.

First, Then, he demonstrates against the Gentiles in particular, that they cannot be justified before God by *the works* they may pretend to have done in obedience to the law of nature, by the ensuing arguments, which we shall not reduce into form; but only propose the force of them, by laying down in the most natural and easy order, the propositions whereof they do consist.

1. The apostle insinuates, ver. 18. that the Gentiles had some notions of truth concerning God, and the worship due to him from the light of nature, ver. 18. though they imprisoned them: and what here he insinuates, he directly proves ver. 19, 20.

2. He asserts, that they did not walk answerably to these notices, but detained them *in unrighteousness;* that is, they suppressed, bore them down, and would not allow them that directive

power over their practices which they claimed; but in opposition to them went on in sin. This he had intimated in general, ver. 18. and he proves it, ver. 21, 22, 23.

3. He proves, that *the wrath of God, is revealed from Heaven*, especially by instances of spiritual plagues, the most terrible of all judgments, against them for their counteracting those notices of truth. This he also intimated, ver. 18. and proves it, ver. 24, 25, 26.

4. He shews, that the Gentiles being thus, by the just judgment of God, given up and left to themselves, did run on from evil to worse in all sorts of abominations; and therefore did render their own condemnation the more sure, inevitable and intolerable. This he does from ver. 26 to 32.

5. To confirm this further, ver. 32. he shews that the fact cannot be denied, in regard that they both practised those evils themselves, and made themselves guilty by their virtual approbation of them in others: nor could it be excused, since they could not but know, if they attended to the light of nature, that such gross abominations are *worthy of death*.

6. The apostle having in the last verse of chap. i. mentioned this aggravation of their sins, that they were against knowledge, takes occasion thence to proceed to a new argument, whereby he at once confirms what he had said about their sinning against knowledge, chap. i. ver. 32. and further evinces his main point, that they must inevitably be condemned by a new argument, which he lays down in the ensuing assertion, either expressed or insinuated.

(1.) He takes notice, that the Gentiles, if he speaks of them, do themselves practise those things, which they judge and condemn others for.

(2.) He takes it for granted, as well he may, that he who condemns any practice of another, doth confess that that practice in itself is worthy of condemnation.

(3.) He hereon infers, that the Gentiles do practise those things, which, according to their own acknowledgment, are in themselves worthy of condemnation. Now this conclusion directly fixes upon them the aggravation mentioned in the close of the proceeding chapter, viz. That they know the things they do to be *worthy of death*. And this sufficiently clears the connection.

(4.) He argues again, that the judgment of God being always according to truth, he will certainly condemn all, who do things that in truth are worthy of condemnation, ver. 2.

(5.) Hereon by an inevitable consequence, ver. 3. he concludes, that God will certainly condemn the Gentiles, which is the main point.

(6.) As an inference from the whole, he concludes, that as any prospect of escape is vain, so they are precluded from all excuse,

or shadow of ground for reclaiming against the sentence of God, which, by their own acknowledgment, proceeds only against practices, that are in truth worthy of condemnation.

7. The apostle having thus locked them up, as it were, under unavoidable condemnation, proceeds ver. 4. to cut off their retreat to that, wherein some of them took sanctuary. They concluded, that God who did forbear them, while they went on in sin, and allowed them to share so deep in his goodness, would not punish them so severely. To cut off this plea, the apostle first taxes them as guilty of a grievous abuse of this dispensation, while they drew encouragement from it to go on in sin. 2. He argues them of gross ignorance of the genuine tendency of this dealing of God. To argue thus, "God spares me and is good to me, therefore I may safely sin against him, and hope for his impunity in committing known sin, against him," is mad and unreasonable.—Reason would say, "God forbears me and so gives me time; he adds to former obligations I lay under to obey him by loading me with new kindnesses, therefore I should be the more studious to please him, and avoid these things which I know will be offensive to him, and be ashamed for former offences." This by the way is the full import of that expression, *The goodness of God leading to repentance.* But of this more anon. 3. Hereon ver. 5. he infers that their abuse of this dispensation and their not returning to obedience, or answering the obligations laid on them increases their guilt, and so lays up materials for an additional libel, and a more highly accented punishment, ver. 5.

Having thus shortly given an account of the scope and meaning of the words, I shall next lay down a few short observations clearly subversive of any argument that can be drawn from them.

(1.) None can say, that the persons, who were under this dispensation did, in fact, understand it to import a call to repentance. The apostle accuses them of ignorance of this, and of abusing it by drawing encouragement from it, that they should escape punishment, though they went on in sin.

(2.) It is plain the apostle's scope led him to no more, but this, to evince, that this dispensation afforded them no ground to hope for impunity, no encouragement to proceed in a course of known sin, that it did aggravate the guilt of their continuance in such sins, and enforce the obligations they otherwise were under to abstinence from them, and the practice of neglected duties. This is all the words will bear, and all that the scope requires.

(3.) The apostle is proving, as we have clearly evinced above, that the persons, with whom he is now dealing, without recourse to the gospel revelation, are shut up from all access to justification before God, acceptance with him, pardon and salvation; certainly therefore he cannot in this place be understood to intend

that these persons were under means sufficient to lead them to that repentance, upon which they might be assured of forgiveness and peace with God.

(4.) This same apostle elsewhere appropriates the call to repentance unto the gospel revelation, Acts xvii. 30. speaking to the Heathens at Athens, he says, *the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*— Here it is plain, that men left to the light of nature, are left without this call, until the gospel come and give this invitation.

[5.] Wherefore we may from the particular scope of this verse, the general scope of the apostle's discourse, and his plain declarations upon other occasions, conclude, 1. That the repentance he here intends, is not that repentance to which the promise of pardon is in the gospel annexed; but only an abstinence from these evil, which their consciences condemn them for, and the return to some sort of performance of the material part of known, but deserted duty. Frequent mention is made of such a repentance in scripture; but no where is pardon promised upon it. 2. This leading imports no more, but that the dispensation we speak of discovers this return to be duty, and gives space or time for it.

[6.] To confirm what has been now said, it is to be observed, that our apostle acquaints, that this forbearance and goodness is exercised towards *the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, Rom. ix. 22. which sufficiently intimates that this dispensation of itself gives no assurance of pardon to these who are under it, but is consistent with a fixed purpose of punishing them. Yet without this assurance, it is impossible there should ever be any call to repentance, that can be available to any of mankind, or answer the hypothesis of those with whom we have to do.

8. In the close of ver. 5. the apostle introduces a discourse of the last judgment for two ends: First, To cut off those abusers of God's goodness from all hopes of escape. He has before shewed that they have stored up sins, the causes of wrath; and here he shews there is a judgment designed, wherein they will reap as they have sown. Thus the words following are a confirmation of the foregoing argument, and enforce the apostle's main scope. Secondly, He does it for clearing the righteousness of God from any imputation that the dispensation he had been speaking of, viz. his forbearance and goodness towards sinners, might tempt blind men to throw upon it: and this he does by shewing that this is not the time of retribution, but that there is an open and solemn distribution designed, wherein God will fully clear his righteousness. To these two ends is this whole account of the last judgment suited. He tells them that there is a *day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* While he speaks of *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, he tacitly grants that by

this dispensation of forbearance, the righteousness of God's judgment is some way clouded or under a veil: but withall he intimates that there is a definite time, a *day* fixed for its manifestation; and that this day will prove a *day of wrath*, that is, a day wherein the vindictive justice of God will signally manifest itself, in punishing such sinners, as they were with whom he deals. In short he acquaints them, that the design of this day is *to reveal the righteous judgment of God*, that is, to manifest to the conviction of angels and men, the righteousness of God's proceedings toward the children of men, particularly as to rewards and punishments. It will be *righteous*, and therefore such sinners as they shall not escape. It will be *revealed* to be such; and so all ground of calumny will be taken away. To clear this, he gives an account of the concernments of that judgment, in so far as it is to his purpose; wherein,

(1.) He teaches, that there will be an open retribution of rewards and punishments, God will render, &c.

(2.) He shews that God will proceed in this retribution upon open and incontestible evidence. He will *render according to works*. The persons who are to be punished shall, to the conviction of on-lookers, be convicted by their *works of impiety*; and the piety of those to whom the rewards are given, shall in like manner be cleared.

(3.) He acquaints them, that the distribution shall be suitable to the character of the persons, the nature and quality of their works. He will render *according to their works*; that is evil to the evil; good to the good. This is all that is intended by *κατα secundum*, or *according*: the meaning is not that he will render according to the merit of their works. For though I own that God will punish according to the just demerit of sin; yet that is not intended here by this phrase *according* to works: for the word in its proper signification intimates, not strict or universal proportion betwixt the things connected by it; much less doth it particularly import, that the one is the meritorious cause of the other; but the word is, in all languages, commonly taken in a more lax signification, to denote any suitableness betwixt the things connected by it. So our Lord says to the blind men, Matth. xix. 29. *According to your faith be it unto you.* Who will say that any faith, but especially such a lame one as we have reason to think they had, did merit that miraculous cure; or that it was every way suitable unto it? Since then the word of itself does not import this, it cannot be taken so here, unless either other scriptures determine us to this sense, or something in the context fix this to be the meaning of it. To take it in this sense as to rewards, is so far from having any countenance from other scriptures, that it is directly contrary to the whole current of them. And when the word is taken in this sense, then the scriptures plainly

tell us that we are not *saved or rewarded by* or *according* to our *works of righteousness*, but *according to his mercy through Jesus Christ*, Tit. iii. 5, 6. Nor is there any thing in the text or context to incline us to take it in this sense, but much on the contrary to demonstrate that this is not the meaning, at least with respect to rewards: for to say, that the reward shall be given us according to our works, that is, for our works, as meritorious of it, flatly contradicts the apostle's scope, which is to prove, that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, do by their works merit only condemnation, and that none can expect upon them absolution, much less reward.—Besides, the works here principally intended are not all our works, nor these, which if any had, would have the fairest pretence to merit, viz. the inward actings of grace, faith, love, &c. but outward works that are evidences of the inward temper and frame of the actors. This is evident from the word itself, from the particular instances elsewhere condescended upon, when the last judgment is spoken of, and from the design of this general judgment.

(4.) He shews, that this retribution will be universal, *to every one, &c.*

(5.) He illustrates further the righteousness of it, ver. 7. by characterizing the persons who are to be rewarded, they are such as *do well*, that is, whose actions openly speak them good, and evidence the honesty of the principle whence they flow; they *continue in well doing*, their walk is uniform and habitually good; flowing from a fixed principle, and not from an external accidental cause; they continue patiently in this course, in opposition to all discouragements: nor do they aim at worldly advantage, but at that *glory, honor* and *immortality*, which God sets before them.—None but they, who are perfectly such, shall have a reward, if it is sought for, according to the tenor of the covenant of works: and in this sense not a few, nor they obscure interpreters, do take the words; as if the apostle had said, if there be any among you, who have perfectly obeyed, ye shall be rewarded: but whereas, I have cleared that none of you are such, ye are cut off from any expectation of reward. But if the sincerity of obedience is only intended, then the meaning is that God will of his grace, according to his promise, and not for their works, give the reward to the sincerely obedient; and thereby will openly evince his righteousness, in dealing with them exactly according to the tenor of the covenant, to which they belong; so that no person, who has any just claim to reward founded upon either covenant, shall want it.

(6.) To clear the glory of God's righteousness further, he specifies the reward; viz. *eternal life*, a reward sufficient to compensate any losses they have been at, evidence God's love to holiness, and his regard to his promises.

(7.) He, *in like* manner, clears the matter further, by giving a description, ver. 8. of the persons, who are to be condemned, which evinces the apparent righteousness of the sentence to be passed against them. They are such against whom it will be made evident, that they have been *contentious*, that is, that they have opposed and suppressed the truths they knew, stifled convictions, and *detained them in unrighteousness:* such as have *not obeyed the truth*, or walked up to their knowledge, but have obeyed *unrighteousness*, following the inclinations of their corrupt hearts. As if the apostle had said, the persons who are to be rewarded are of a character that ye can lay no manner of claim to, but your character is perfectly that of those who are to be condemned.

[8.] He specifies the punishment, *indignation and wrath.*

[9.] To fix the truth and importance of this deeper upon their minds, he repeats and enlarges upon this assertion, ver. 9, 10. thereby assuring them that the matter is infallibly certain, and to give a further evidence of the *righteousness of God*, he adjects a clause and repeats it twice over, viz. *first to the Jew and also to the Gentile*, wherein he shews the impartiality of God's proceedings. He will not suffer one soul, who has any just claim to reward, to go unrewarded, be he Jew or Gentile. He will not allow one sinner, to whom punishment belongs, to escape unpunished. The Jews' privilege shall not save them, if guilty, but judgment shall begin first at the house of God; nor shall the bare want of privileges prejudge the Gentiles.

[10.] To confirm this he adduces an argument from the nature of God, ver. 11. viz. that with him there is *no respect of persons*, that is, no unjust partiality towards persons, upon considerations, that do not belong unto the rule, whereby the cause is to be tried.

[11.] To strengthen this and obviate objections, ver. 12. he asserts, that God will proceed impartially in judging them according to the most unexceptionable rule. He will condemn the Jews for their transgressions of that law, which he gave to them. He will condemn the Gentiles, not for the transgression of the written law which they had not, but for their sins against the law of nature which they had. And so neither of them shall have ground to except against the rule, according to which God proceeds with them.

[12.] Hence he takes occasion, ver. 13. to repel an objection or plea of the Jews, who might fancy that they should not be punished or perish, to whom God had given the privilege of the written law. To cut of this plea he tells them, that where persons expect justification by the law, it is not the *knowledge* of the *law*, or *hearing* of it, but *obedience* to it that will be sustained. Here he does not suppose that any shall be justified by *doing the law*; nay, he proves the contrary. It is manifestly his design, in the

whole discourse, to do so: but he shews that the plea of the Jews, that they had the law, is insufficient; as if he had said, be it granted, that justification is to be had by the law; yet even upon that supposition, ye have no title to it, unless ye perfectly obey it. The law pleads for none, but those who do so. And since none of you do thus obey it, as shall be evinced anon, ye must perish, as I said, ver. 12.

[13.] Whereas the Gentiles might plead, it would be hard treatment if they should be *condemned*, since they were *without the law*; he demonstrates that they could not except against their own condemnation upon this ground, because although they wanted the written law, yet they have another law, viz. that of *nature*; for the breaches of which they might justly be condemned. That they had such a law he proves against them, ver. 14. 15. *First*, From their practice: he tells them that by the guidance of mere nature they did the *works of the law*, that is, they performed the material part of some of the duties which the law enjoins, and thereby evidenced acquaintance with the law, or as he words it, *they shew the work of the law written in their hearts*, that is, the remainders of their natural light, or reason, performs the work of the law commanding duty, and forbidding sin. *Secondly*, He proves that they have such a law from the working of their conscience. He whose conscience accuses him for not doing some things, and approves him for doing other things, knows that he was obliged to do the one and omit the other, and consequently has some knowledge of the law. This is the apostle's scope, ver. 14. 15. So that *for*, in the beginning of ver. 14. refers to and renders a reason of the first clause of ver. 12. that they who had *sinned without law*, viz. the written law, *shall perish without law*, that is, not for violating the written law, which they had not.

[14.] Having removed these objections, he concludes his account of the last judgment, ver. 16. wherein he gives them an account, 1*st*, To whom it belongs originally to judge, it is God. 2*dly*, Who the person is to whom the visible administration is committed, it is Jesus Christ. 3*dly*, What the matter of that judgment is, or what will be judged, it is the *secrets of hearts*. Although works will be insisted upon as evidences for the conviction of on-lookers, of the righteousness of God in his distribution of rewards and punishments; yet the *secrets of men* will also be laid open, for the further confusion of sinners, and justification of the severity of God against them.

Secondly, Now the apostle having proven, that the Gentiles are all under condemnation, and so cannot be justified by any works they can do; and having likewise removed some exceptions of the Jews that fell in his way, he proceeds next directly to prove

the same against the Jews in particular, and answers their objections from chap. ii. ver. 17. to chap. iii. ver. 8. inclusive.

To prove this charge against the Jews, he makes use only of one argument, which yet is capable of bearing the weight of many conclusions or inferences. To understand this, we must take notice, that the apostle is dealing here with the Jews, who sought to be *justified* by *works*. And,

1. By way of concession, he grants them several privileges above the Gentiles from ver. 17. to ver. 20. inclusive, viz. That they were *called Jews*; that they had *the law*, on which they rested and pretended some peculiar interest in God, as being externally in covenant with him, ver. 17. of which they *boasted*; that they had some knowledge of the *law*, and pretended themselves capable of guiding others. This he grants them in a variety of expressions, ver. 18, 19, 20. By which the apostle secretly taxes their vanity, and insinuates, that whatever they had in point of privilege, they abused it.

2. The apostle charges them with a practical contradiction to this their knowledge, and this he makes good against them, particularly against their highest pretenders, their teachers, 1. By condescending on several instances, wherein they were guilty and appealing to their consciences for the truth of them, ver. 22, 23. which I shall not insist in explaining. 2. He proves it further by a testimony of scripture, ver. 24. wherein God complains, that their provocations were such, as tempted the Gentiles to *blaspheme his name*.

This is the argument, the conclusion he leaves to themselves to draw. And indeed it will bear all the conclusions formerly laid down against the Gentiles. Whatever their knowledge was, they were not *doers*, but *breakers* of the *law*, and so could not be *justified* by it, ver. 13. but might expect to perish for their transgressions of it, according to ver. 12. They sinned against knowledge, and so deserved as severe resentments as the Gentiles, chap. i. ver. 32. They could not pretend ignorance; for they taught others the contrary, and so were without excuse, chap. ii. ver. 1.

The apostle next proceeds to answer their objections. The first whereof is brought in, ver. 25. The short of it is this, the Jews pretended they had *circumcision*, the seal of God's covenant, and so claimed the privileges of it. This objection is not directly proposed, but the answer anticipating it is introdcced as a confirmation or reason enforcing the conclusion aimed at, viz. That they could not be justified by the law: and therefore it is, that we find the casual particle *for* in the beginning of the verse. This much for the manner wherein the objection is introduced. To this objection the apostle answers,

1. By a concession ; *circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law*, that is, if thou perfectly obey the commands, then thou mayest in justice demand the privileges of the covenant, and plead the seal of it, as a pledge of the faithfulness of God in the promises.

2. He answers directly by shewing, that this seal signified just nothing as to their claim of a legal righteousness, because they were *breakers of the law. But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* The short of the matter is this ; this seal is only a conditional engagement of the faithfulness of God : it does not say, thou shalt get the privileges whether thou perform the condition or not: so that by this means, if the condition is not performed, ye have nothing to ask, and ye are as remote from a claim to the reward, as they who want the seal.

3. The apostle, to illustrate and confirm what he had said about the unprofitableness of circumcision in case of transgression, shews, that a Gentile upon supposition that it were possible, obeying the law, but wanting the seal of the covenant, would have a better title to the privileges promised, than a Jew, who had the seal, but wanted the obedience, ver. 26. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law*, that is, if a Gentile should yield that obedience the law requires, *shall not his uncircumcision, be counted for circumcision ?* That is, shall not he, notwithstanding he wanteth the outward sign of circumcision, be allowed to plead an interest in the blessings promised to obedience, and to insist upon the faithfulness of God for the performance of the promises made to the obedient, of which circumcision is the sign ? The reason of this is plain, circumcision seals the performance of the promise to the obedient ; the Gentile obeying has that, which is the ground whereon the faithfulness of God is engaged to perform the promise, viz. obedience, and so a real title to the thing promised, though he wants the outward sign ; whereas the disobeying Jew has only the seal, which secures nothing, but upon the condition of that obedience, which he has not yielded. This is only spoken by way of supposition, not as if any of the Gentiles had yielded such obedience : for he had plainly proven the contrary before. The apostle's reason is this—circumcision is an engagement for the performance of the promise to the obedient. The disobedient Jew has therefore no title to the promise ; whereas the Gentile that obeys having that obedience to which the promise is made, has a real right to it, and so might expect the performance of it, as if he had the outward seal.

4. To clear yet further the unprofitableness of circumcision without obedience, the apostle, upon the foresaid supposition, shews, that the Gentile obeying would not only have the better ti-

tle; but his obedience would contribute to clearing the justice of God, in condemning the disobedient Jew, ver. 27: *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law*, that is, if a Gentile wanting circumcision and the security thereby given, with the other advantages which the Jews have, discover the inexcusableness of your disobedience, who have the *letter* and *circumcision*, or the written law, that is, who have a clearer rule of duty and plainer promise.

5. To remove entirely the foundation of this objection, the apostle clears the real design of circumcision, and the character of the person to whom the advantages do belong, ver. 28, 29. wherein he shews negatively, that the Jew to whom the promises do belong is not every one who belongs to that nation, or is outwardly a Jew; and that the circumcision, to which the promises are absolutely made, is not the *outward circumcision*, which is *in the flesh*, ver. 28; but positively, that the Jew, to whom the promised blessings belong, is he who is a *Jew inwardly*, that is, who has that inward frame of heart which God requires of his people; and the circumcision, to which blessings are absolutely promised, is that inward renovation of heart which is the principle of the obedience required by, and accepted of God, ver. 29.

This objection being removed out of the way, the apostle proceeds to answer an instance against what he has now said in the three or four first verses of the 3d chap. The objection is proposed ver. 1. and is in short this, By your reasoning, would the Jews say, we have no advantage beyond the Gentiles, and circumcision is utterly unprofitable. To this he answers,

1. By denying flatly what is asserted in the objection, declaring, notwithstanding of all this, the Jews had every way the advantage.

2. Lest this should appear a vain assertion, he clears it by an instance of the highest consequence, viz. that they had *the oracles of God*, which the Gentiles wanted, wherein that relief against transgressions, which the Gentiles were strangers to, is revealed, as he expressly teaches afterwards, ver. 21. As if the apostle had said, Though ye Jews fail of obedience, and so are cut off from justification by the law as a covenant of works, yet ye have a righteousness revealed to you in the law and the prophets, ver. 21. to which the sinner may betake himself for relief; this the Gentiles who want the law and the prophets know nothing of.

3. He clears, that this is a great advantage, notwithstanding that many of the Jews were not the better for it, ver. 3. thus at once anticipating an objection that might be moved, and confirming what he had said. *What if some did not believe*, that is, though some have fallen short of the advantages of this revelation, shall

we therefore say it was not in itself a privilege? Nay, it is in itself a privilege, and they by their own fault in not believing, have forfeited the advantages of it to themselves only; *for shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* That is, assuredly believers will not be the worse dealt with for the unbelief of others; but they will obtain the advantages of the promises.

We have insisted much longer upon this context than was designed, but we hope that they who consider that the apostle's arguments and his whole purposes, are directly levelled at that which is the main scope of these papers, will not reckon this a faulty digression. And besides, we shall immediately see the usefulness of this, in order to remove the foundation of a great many objections drawn from this context by Mr. Humfrey: some of whose notions we shall consider after we have removed one objection more, and it is this:

VII. The words of the apostle Paul to the Athenians, Acts xvii. 27. are made use of for this purpose. The apostle tells them in the preceding words, that the God whom he preached, was he who *made the worlds, hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live and move and have our being,* The sum of what is pleaded from this testimony amounts to this, that men left to the light of nature are in duty bound to *seek the Lord; that God is not so far from them,* but that he may be found; and that if they will *feel* after him, that is, trace these dark discoveries of him, in the works of creation and providence, they may *happily find him.*

For answer to this we say, 1. No word is here to be stretched further than the occasion and scope of the apostle requires and allows. 2, The occasion of this discourse was, that Paul being at Athens, saw that city set upon the worship of idols, and overlooked the one true God, which moved him with wrath, and gave occasion to this discourse; the evident scope whereof is to shew, that they were to blame, that they overlooked the true God, and gave that worship to idols, which was only to be given to God. For convincing them of this, 3. He shews, that the true God, by his works of creation and providence had in so far discovered himself, that if by these works they sought after the knowledge of him, they might find him so far, or know so much, as to understand that he alone was the true God, to whom divine worship was due. 4. He owns, that indeed these discoveries were but dark, to wit, in comparison of the discoveries he had made of himself in the word; which is sufficiently intimated by that expression of

feeling after him, they might *find him*, so far as to deliver them from that gross idolatry and neglect of him they were involved in. Here is all that the scope holds out: but he does not say, that they might find him, so as to obtain the saving knowledge of him by these works of providence; but on the contrary he tells us, *that God winked at the times of ignorance*, that is, seemed as if he did not notice men, and in his holy and sovereign justice left them to find by their own experience, which by any means they had, that they could not arrive to the saving knowledge of God; though they might, as has been just now said, have gone so far as to disentangle themselves from that gross idolatry for which he now reproves them. He does not say, that God then called them to saving repentance, gave them any discovery of his purpose of mercy, and thereon invited them to peace and acceptance: but on the contrary, he tells, *that* now *he calls all men every where to repent*, ver. 30. which sufficiently intimates that they had not that call before. In a word, it is not that seeking or finding of God, or that nearness to God which is here intended, that elsewhere the scripture speaks of, when it treats about men's case who are living under the gospel, and have God in Christ revealed, and the gospel call to turn, to seek after and find him to their own salvation; as the scope of the place fully clears. Any one that would see this place fully considered, may find it done by the learned Dr. Owen, in that accurate, though short digression concerning *universal grace*, inserted in his *Theolog. Pantodap.* page 33. There likewise is that other scripture, Acts xiv. ver. 15, 16, 17. largely considered. On which I shall not now insist, seeing there is nothing in it that has the least appearance of opposition to what we have asserted, if not that God is there said, *not to have left himself without a witness* among the nations, in as much as he *did good to them, gave fruitful seasons*, &c. This is granted: but these necessaries of life are no witness that God designed for them mercy and forgiveness, as has been made appear above, and as the Spirit of God tells us there; *for God suffered them to walk in their own way.*

VIII. Some alledge that there is a law of grace connatural to man in his lapsed state, and that in substance it is this, That God will pardon sinners upon their repentance: and they tell us, that this law of grace is as much written in the heart of lapsed man, as the law of nature was written in the heart of innocent man. To this purpose speaks Mr. Humfrey in his *Peaceable Disquisitions*,* and that with such an air of confidence, as might make one expect better proof than he has offered.

* Peace. Disquis. Chap. 4. page 56.

We shall just now examine Mr. Humfrey's arguments. As to the notion itself of a connatural law of grace written in the hearts of all mankind in this lapsed condition, we look upon it as absolutely false. It contradicts scripture, reason and experience. My design excuseth me from the use of scripture arguments. Experience I need not insist upon, after what has been already said.—Reason will not allow us to call any law connatural to man, save upon one of these three accounts; either because we are born with actual knowledge of it; or, because it lies so open and is so suited to our rational faculties, that any man, who has the use of reason, can scarce miss thinking of it, at least, refuse his assent to it, when it is proposed to him; or, finally, because it is nearly connected with notions and principles that are self-evident, and is easily deducible from them. Now this discovery of mercy to sinners merely upon repentance is connatural in none of these senses. I know no truth that is connatural in the first sense. The ingenious Mr. Locke has said enough against this.* In the second sense, it is not connatural. Who will tell me, that this is a self-evident proposition, while so great a part of the more knowing and judicious part of mankind, not only refuse their assent to it, but reject it as a plain untruth? Yea, I doubt if any that understands the case, and knows nothing of the satisfaction of Christ, will give his assent to it. In this last sense it is not connatural; for if it were so, it were easy demonstrable by these self-evident principles, to which it is nearly allied: which, when Mr. Humfrey shall have demonstrated from these principles, or any other for him, we shall then consider it; but this I am apprehensive will never be done. In a word, all these truths, which with any tolerable propriety of speech can be called connatural, if they are not self-evident, are yet such as admit of an easy demonstration. And it is foolish to call any truth connatural, unless it is such, as either needs no proof, or is easily demonstrable. This is sufficient to overthrow this notion.

Before we consider the arguments which Mr. Humfrey advances for his opinions, I shall offer to the reader a more full view of it in his own words. He then asserts, "that there is a connatural law of grace written in the heart of man, that is, that this "law of lapsed nature, this law of grace, or remedying law, is "written in the heart of man in regard of his fallen nature, no less "than the law of pure nature itself was. The law of nature, "(says he) as I take it, is the dictates of right reason, declaring "to us our duty to God, to ourselves and to our neighbors: and "the light of the same reason will dictate to us, when we have "failed in that duty, to repent and turn to God, with trusting to

* Essay on Human Understand. Book 1.

" his mercy and pardon if we do so, and not else. We do find " it legible in our hearts, that God is good and wisely gracious to " consider our lost estate, and pity our infirmities and necessary " frailty."* After he has told us of a threefold promulgation of this law of grace under the Patriarchs, by Moses and Christ, which he calls three editions of the same law; he subjoins, " Now I say, " that though the Heathen be not under (or have not) this law of " grace, in the third and last setting out, or in the state under the " gospel; yet they are under it (or have it) in the state of the " ancients, or as they had it in the first promulgation; and upon " supposition that any of them do, according to the light they " have, live up in sincerity to this law, I dare not be the man " that shall deny, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ " [procuring this law or covenant for them, as for us and all the " world] they shall be saved even as we." And a little before he says, " These characters thus engraven in the heart of man, is " the same law of grace in its practical contents, which is more " largely paraphrased upon in the scriptures."

Surely the apostle Paul had a very different notion of the state of the Heathen world from this gentleman, when he tells us emphatically, *that they are strangers from the covenants of promise*, that *they are without God*, that is, without the saving knowledge of God; for another sense the word will scarcely bear: that they are *without Christ, without hope, afar off*, &c. But it is not my design to offer scripture arguments against this anti-scriptural divinity. I leave this to others, and proceed to his proofs: nor shall I in the consideration of them take notice of every thing that might be justly quarrelled; but only hint at the main faults.

1. He reasons to this effect: If there is no connatural law of grace written in the heart of man, then none of those who lived before Moses could be saved, in as much as there was then no other law by which they could be saved.† This argument he borrows from Suarez, and concludes it triumphantly thus, " which " is a truth so evident, as makes the proof of that law by that reason alone to be good."

But for all this commendation, I think this argument has a double fault. 1. It proves not the point, viz. that there is a law of grace written in the hearts of all men by nature; but only that there was such a law written in their hearts that were saved. This argument is built upon a supposition that is plainly false, viz. that there was no other way that they could be saved but by the law of grace written in their hearts. This, I say, is false; for they were saved by the gospel discovery of Christ in the promise re-

* Peace. Disquis. Chap. 4, page 56, 5 7.
† Peace. Disquis. page 56.

vealed to them by God, and wherein the generality of the Lord's people were more fully instructed by the patriarchs, who were preachers of righteousness. And this revelation and preaching was to them instead of the written word. Thus we see this mighty argument proves just nothing.

2. He reasons from Abraham's pleading with God on behalf of the righteous men in Sodom. Here he thinks it evident, that there were righteous men. He proves, that there were none righteous then, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, and therefore concludes, that these righteous persons did belong to, and were dealt with according to the covenant of grace.* But now what does all this prove? Does it prove that these men were under the covenant of grace, and that they were dealt with according to the tenor of it? Well, I grant it. But what will he infer from this, that therefore all the world were under the covenant of grace, or shall be dealt with according to its tenor? I would have thought that one who has read Suarez, might know that this conclusion will not follow. If there had been any righteous men in Sodom, it is true they were under the covenant of grace; and I add, if there be any such in the world, they are under it; therefore all the world are so? Who sees not that this will not follow? Again, supposing that there were righteous men in Sodom, how will Mr. Humfrey prove, that they had no other rule of their life, or ground of their hope, but his connatural law of grace? Why might they not have revelation? Was not Abraham, to whom God revealed himself, and made so many gracious promises, well known to some in Sodom? Might not the fame of such a person so near easily reach them? Was not he the deliverer of Sodom some eighteen years before, and did not Lot his friend, who was well acquainted with the revelations made to Abraham, live in Sodom?

3. Mr. Humfrey tells us, that the law of grace was in Adam and Noah's time published to all the world, and that it never was repealed, and therefore all the world are still under it, and so in a capacity of salvation.†

But 1. This, were it granted, will not prove Mr. Humfrey's connatural law of grace. The gospel is revealed to all the inhabitants of England; therefore the law of grace is written in their hearts: he must know very little of many people in England, who will admit the consequence. 2. Nor will it prove, that all the world are under the gospel revelation, even in its first edition, to use Mr. Humfrey's words. Suppose God once revealed to the world, when it was comprised in the family of Noah, the covenant of grace, and so all this little world had the external revelation: will Mr. Hum-

* Peace. Disquis. page 60.
† Ibid, page 62.

frey hence infer, that all the descendants of Noah, after so long a tract of time, in so many different nations, have still the same revelation? If he do, the consequence is nought. It is as sure as any thing can be, that very quickly most of the descendants of Noah lost in so far that revelation, or at least, corrupted it with their vain additions to that degree, that it could be of real advantage to no man. 3. Nor will what Mr. Humfrey talks of his repeal help out his argument. To deprive a people of the advantage of an external revelation, there is no need of a formal repeal by a published statute; it is enough that men by their wickedness lose all remembrance of it, and suffer it to fall into desuetude, and God sees not meet to renew the revelation to them or their posterity.

4. Mr. Humfrey will prove his point by a syllogism, and it runs thus, *The doers of the law are justified,* Rom. ii. ver. 13. but the Gentiles are doers of the law; *ergo,* some of the Gentiles are justified before God.

The conclusion of this argument is the direct antithesis of that position, which the apostle makes it his business in that whole context to prove, as is evident from the account already given of that context. This is pretty bold. But let us see how he proves his minor. This he pretends to do from Rom. i. 14. where it is said, that *the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law,* and so are doers of the law, and consequently shall be justified.

Well, is this the way this gentleman interprets scripture upon other occasions? I hope not. He has no regard to the scope or design of the apostle's discourse. All that the apostle says here, is, that the Gentiles are in so far doers of the law, that their doing is proof that they have some knowledge of it. The persons who here are said to be doers of the law, are the very same persons of whom the apostle says, ver. 12. that they shall perish without the law. But we have fully cleared this context before, and thither I refer the reader.

But Mr. Humfrey reforms his argument, and makes it run thus, He who sincerely keeps the law, shall be justified according to that of our Lord, *keep the commandments if thou wilt enter into eternal life;* and that of the apostle, *God will render eternal life to every one that patiently continues in well-doing;* but argues he, some Gentiles keep the law sincerely: and therefore it is according to the gospel, which requires not the rigor, but accepts of sincere obedience.

As to our author's major, if the meaning of it be, that we shall be justified before God for, or upon our sincere obedience, according to the gospel, I crave leave to differ from him; nor will the scriptures adduced by him prove it in this sense. The first is a reference of a young man to the covenant of works, who was not seeking salvation, but *eternal life* by doing, in order to discover to

him his own inability and his need of Christ. But as to this commentators may be consulted. The other text I have cleared above.

His minor I flatly deny: well, but our author will prove it by a new syllogism, which runs thus, He who yields such obedience as the Jews, who are circumcised in heart, do, yields that sincere obedience, upon which the gospel accepts and justifies men; but the Gentiles, or some of them yield such obedience.

I have already entered my dissent against the last clause of the major, viz. That the gospel justifies men on sincere obedience; but it is not my design to debate the point of justification with our author at this time, and so I let this proposition pass: yet I again deny the minor, which our author essays to prove thus, That some of the Gentiles do obey in that sense, in which the Jews, who are circumcised inwardly or in heart, do obey: this he pretends to demonstrate from the apostle's words, Rom. ii. 26, 27. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousnsss of the law, &c. and shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law.*

But where will our author find the proof of his minor in these words? There is nothing like it, unless he take the antecedent of a hypothetic proposition, for a plain assertion. But this antecedent needs not be allowed possible, and yet the apostle's words and his assertion would hold good, and all that he aims at be reached. Every one knows, that in such propositions, it is only the connexion that is asserted. As for the meaning of the text, I have shewed before that it is not for our author's purpose.

5. But our author has another argument, which he thinks is clearer than all the rest, and professes himself perfectly stricken with the evidence of it, as with a beam of light never to be withstood, or any more to be doubted. Well this mighty argument runs thus, "If this was the chief advantage the Jew had over the "Gentile, that one had the oracles of God, and the other had "not, then was there not this difference between them, that one "is only in a state of nature, and the other in a state of grace; "or that one was in a capacity, and the other under an impossi- "bility of salvation. For this were an advantage of a far greater "nature. But this was the advantage, Rom. iii. 2. *Chiefly be- "cause to them were committed the oracles of God;*"* *ergo:*

I must confess, that I am not stricken with so much evidence upon the proposal of this argument, as it seems our author was.—To me this argument appears a plain sophism. That the Jews had the oracles of God, was a greater advantage, than our author seems to think it. And while the apostle calls it the chief advantage of the Jews above the Gentiles, that they had the *oracles of God,*

* Peace. Disquis. page 63, 64.

how will our author infer from this, that they were upon an equal footing as to the means absolutely necessary for salvation; or which is the same, as to a capacity of salvation; for certainly he that wants the means absolutely necessary to salvation is not capable of salvation, in that sense, which belongs to our purpose? For my part I would draw the quite contrary conclusion from it; thus, the Jews had this privilege above the Gentiles, that they had the oracles of God entrusted with them, wherein the only way of salvation is revealed, *being witnessed to by the law and the prophets*, Rom. iii. 21. and therefore had access to salvation: whereas on the other hand, the Gentiles wanting divine revelation, which alone can discover that righteousness, whereby a sinner can be justified, did want the means absolutely necessary to salvation, and so were not in a capacity of salvation. Now where is our author's boasted of demonstration? The occasion of his mistake is this, he once inadvertently supposed, that these two advantages, divine revelation, and access of salvation, were quite different, and that the one was not included in the other. But of this enough.

Mr. Humfrey, I know, may say, they had the law of grace in their hearts. But that is the question. Our author asserts this; but he does so without proof. We have all this while been seeking proof of this: hitherto we have met with none. We have met with some scriptures interpreted or wrested into a sense plainly inconsistent with their scope and intention, without any regard had to the context and drift of the discourse, which is no safe way of managing scriptures.

Next, he insists upon the story of the Ninevites' repentance.—They were without the church; it was a law of grace which led them to repent. But had not the Ninevites divine revelation? Did they not repent at the preaching of Jonah? How will our author prove that Jonah never dropped a word, that there was a possibility of stopping the progress of the controversy by their turning from their evil courses? Did not Jonah apprehend, that the event would be a further forbearance? But it may be some may say, Jonah had no mind they should be spared, and therefore would not drop any encouragement: but we know that it was not of choice that he went there; and as he went there in obedience to God, so no doubt, he who had been so sharply disciplined for disobedience, would speak what the Lord commanded him. Again, had they assurance of pardon or eternal salvation upon their repentance? Was it gospel repentance? Or did it reach farther than a forbearance of temporal judgments?

Well, but the instance of Cornelius seems more pat to his purpose. He was a Gentile, was accepted of God; and Peter tells us, that *in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted*. But who will assure me that Cornelius was a stranger

to the scriptures? Did he not know them? Did he not believe them? How could that be? It is plain he was a proselyte and embraced the Jewish religion, as to its substance, and that he did believe, since he *pleased God* and was *accepted*. Now we know, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*. What wanted he then? Why, he wanted to be informed that the Messiah promised was *come*, and that *Christ Jesus* was *he*. As to what the apostle says of God's *acceptance of persons of all nations*, any one that will give himself the trouble of considering his scope, and the circumstances of the place, will see, that it is nothing else but a comment upon the design of the vision he got to instruct him, that now God was to admit persons of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, to a participation of the covenant blessings.

DIGRESSION,

A short Digression concerning God's Government of the Heathen World, occasioned by the foregoing Objections, wherein an attempt is made to account for the Occurrences that have the most favorable Aspect to them, without supposing any Intention or Design of their Salvation, which is adjected as an Appendix to the Answers given to Mr. Humfrey's *Objections, wherein it is made evident, that there is no need to suppose the Heathens under a Law or Government of Grace.*

If I should here stop, the persons with whom I have to do, might possibly allege, that the main strength of their cause remains untouched, and the most straitening difficulty that presses ours is not noticed. The short of the matter is, they inquire, What government are the Heathen world under? They conceive it must be allowed a government of grace, since they are not dealt by according to the demerit of their sins. Possibly we might propose some questions that would be no less hard to satisfy, by those who talk of an universal law of grace: but this would not remove the difficulty, though it might embarrass the opposers of our sentiments. I shall therefore open my mind in this matter, and offer what occurs on this head. If I mistake, it will plead somewhat for me, that the subject, so far as I know, is not usually spoken of by others, and I have not of choice meddled with it, but was led to it by my subject, that requires some consideration of it. If we state right thoughts in this matter, it will give light to many things, that otherwise are dark. What I have to say, I shall propose in the subsequent gradation.

1. Man was originally made under a law that is holy, good, righteous, equal and just; this law required of all subjected to it exact, punctual and perfect obedience; and for its preservation it

was armed with a penal sanction, answerable to the high and tender regard, which the infinitely holy, wise and great God had for the honor of that law, that was the declaration of his will, bore the impress of his authority and representation of all his moral excellencies. And besides all this, he also proposed a reward, suitable to his wisdom and goodness, for which his faithfulness became pledged. It is not needful to launch out in proof of the several branches of this assertion. That man was made under a law, is questioned by none, but Atheists; and they have their mouths sufficiently stopped of old and late by many persons of worth and learning. That this law is holy, just and good, cannot without notable injury to the Deity be denied. That it exacted perfect obedience, is so evident, that no person, who thinks what he says, can deny it. A law not requiring perfect obedience, to its own precepts, is a law not requiring what it requires, which is plain nonsense. A posterior law may not require perfect obedience to a prior: but every law requires perfect obedience to itself. That this law was armed with a penal sanction is evident from the wisdom of the law-giver, who could not enact such laws, which he knew men would transgress, without providing for the honor of his own authority. Besides, if there is no penal sanction, it is not to be expected that laws could ever reach their end, especially as things have always stood with man. But were all those proofs given up, the effects of vindictive justice in the world, with the fears that sinners are under, lest all these are only the beginning of sorrows, sufficiently confirm this truth, and moreover assure us, that it is such a penalty as suits every way the offence in its nature and aggravations. But I know none of those things will be questioned by those, whom we have mainly under view at present.

2. All the children of men, in all ages and in all places of the world, have been and are guilty of violations of this law. We have heard the Deists owning this before; and Christians will not deny it. Deists would have thought it their interest to deny it: but since, it is unquestionable that the generality offend, in instances past reckoning. If they had affirmed, that any one did, in no instance offend, they might have been required to make good their assertion: but this they could not do. They durst not condescend. And therefore it must be owned that the best, not in one instance, but in many, violate this law.

3. Upon account of these violations of his holy and righteous law, all mankind, every individual, and every generation of men, that have lived in the world, are obnoxious to justice. By those sins they have forfeited any claim they might have laid to the reward of perfect obedience, and are liable to the penalty in the sanction of the law. And God might, at any time, have righteously inflicted it, either upon any individual or any whole race of men.

I determine not now what that punishment was. They who talk that our offences are small, and extenuated them, seem scarcely impressed with suitable notions of God, and I doubt will not be sustained judges competent of the qualities of offences and injuries done to his honor. But whatever the punishment is, eternal, or not, which I dispute not now, because we agree about it with those, whom we now have under consideration, it is certain none can prove that it is all confined to time, or that any temporal punishment is sufficient for the least offence that is committed against God. And it is also clear, that, upon one's sinning, the penalty might be presently inflicted, without any injustice, provided the penal sanction were suitable and just in its constitution, as of necessity it must be, where God made the law and constituted the punishment.

4. Although God righteously might have cut off any generation of men, and swept the earth clean; yet has he seen meet to spare sinners, even multitudes of them, for a long time. A piece of conduct truly astonishing! Especially it would appear so, if we understood how much God hates sin. The only reason why the Heathen world hath not admired it more, and been more extensive in their inquiries into the reasons of it, is because they had but very short and imperfect notions of God's holiness, and the evil of sin. They took notice of God's forbearance of some notorious offenders. Some of them stumbled at it, and some of them endeavored to account for it. But the wonder of God's sparing a world full of sinners, was little noticed, and though they had observed it, they would have quickly found themselves as much at a loss here, as any where else. The scriptures have not gratified the curiosity of men with such a full account, as our minds would have desired, that are too forward to question him particularly about his ways, who gives an account of none of his matters: yet some reasons of this conduct are dropped that may satisfy the humble. 1. God made a covenant with Adam, wherein his posterity, as well as himself were concerned and included. They were to be gainers or losers as he acquitted himself well or ill. This transaction, I know, is denied by some Christians. I shall not dispute the matter with them: others have done it. I now take it for granted. And if they will not suppose it, it is but the loss of this reason. And let them if they can put a better in its room. Upon supposition, that there was such a transaction, and that it was just, as we must allow all to be, whereof God is the author, it was not only equal, but in point of wisdom, apparently necessary, or at least, highly suitable, that all concerned in this transaction should be brought into being, to reap the fruits of it. But this was impossible if the world had not been spared. 2. God, in sparing the world, had a design of mercy upon some. And ma-

ny of them were to proceed from some of the worst of sinners. He designed to save some in all ages, and in most places. Their progenitors must therefore, of necessity, be kept alive. He bears with the provoking carriage of evil men; because out of their loins he intends to extract others, whom he will form for the *glory of his grace.* 3. God is patient toward sinners, to manifest the equity of his future justice upon them. When men are spared and continue in sin, the pleas of infirmity and mistake are cut off, and they are convicted of malice. They are silenced, and onlookers satisfied, that severity is justly exercised on them. *Quanto, Dei magis judicium tardum est, tanto magis justum.** As patience, while it is exercised, is the silence of his justice; so when it is abused, it silences men's complaints against his justice. Other reasons of this conduct we might glean from the scriptures: but my design allows me not to insist. Nor indeed do they descend so low as to satisfy curious wits. *Lo, these are parts of his ways* and aims, *but how little a portion is heard,* that is, even by revelation known *of him?* says Job, chap. xxvi. 14.

5. The world, or sinners in it, are spared, not by a proper reprieve, that is, a delay of punishment, after the offenders are taken up, questioned, tried, convicted, and solemnly condemned; the way, manner and time of their punishment fixed, by a judicial application of the general threatening of the law in this particular case, by the judge competent, and the sentence plainly intimated; a delay of the execution after this, if it is of the judge's proper motion, if the offender is not imprisoned, if he is employed, and if favors are conferred upon him, and obedience required of him, gives hopes of impunity and escape; and if the persons commit not new offences, without, at least, an appearance of insincerity, they are very seldom condemned upon the first sentence: but sinners are spared by a forbearance, or wise and just connivance, if the word would not offend. The Governor of the world knows and sees the carriage of sinners, is aware of their sins, and keeps silence for a time; but yet keeps an eye upon them, calls them not into question, puts off the trial, takes them not up, as it were, and winks at them. Now all this may be justly done for a time; the sinners may be employed, and acts of bounty, for holy and wise ends, may be conferred on them, and exercised towards them, and that without the least injustice, without any design of pardoning; as the sequel of this discourse will more fully clear.

6. This forbearance of God is wise, just and holy: for 1. He is the only competent judge, as to the time of punishing offenders. It cannot be made appear, that he may not thus delay, even where he has no thought of pardoning. 2. It implies no approbation of

* "The slower that the judgment of God is, it is the more just."

the faults formerly committed or those they may commit, during this interval of time, since he has sufficiently testified against them by the laws he has made, which forbid them by the penalty annexed to those laws, and by examples of his severity upon others, which have not been wanting in any generation. These may sufficiently acquit him, however for a time he keeps silent, and conceals, as it were, his knowledge of the offences of some, or his resentments against them, on account of them. 3. He accomplishes purposes worthy of him; which are sufficient to justify him in this conduct, while he keeps silence, and carries to them as if there were no offence, or he knew none, and they go on in their rebellion, or secret practices against his law and government. Impudent offenders have no place left, either for denial or excuse of their crimes, or complaints against the severity of his resentments. Spectators are made to see that it is not infirmity or mistake, but fixed alienation or enmity that is so sharply punished. He serves himself of them, and makes them, though they mean not so, carry on the designs of his glory, either in helping or trying, or bringing into being persons, whom he has designs of mercy upon. And sure he may justly do this, since not only he has the best title to their obedience; but he has all the reason and right in the world to use that life, while he spares it, for what purposes he pleases, which they have forfeited to justice. Who can blame him, if sometimes he spares secret plotters, and lets them go on till their plots are sufficiently ripened for their conviction, and others' satisfaction. Nor is there any ground to quarrel, if he deal even with the worst, as equal judges do with the mother, guilty of some manifest crime; they not only spare and delay the execution, till the child whom they design mercy to, is brought forth; but do not take notice of her, or intimate even a purpose of punishment, till afterwards, lest the child should suffer by the mother's despair and grief. 4. This is yet more remarkably just in God, who can on the one hand secure the criminal, so that justice shall not suffer by the delay, and on the other, that the criminal shall not run out into those impieties, that would cross the ends, endanger the safety, or wrong the reputation of his government, with those who are capable of making an equal estimate of things.

7. It was every way suitable and necessary that the persons thus spared, should be continued under a moral government. They were not to be ruled by mere force: 1. Because they are, while under such a forbearance, capable of some sort of a moral government. When a prince deals with persons, whom he knows to be on treasonable plots against this government, and conceals his resentment, he still manages them as subjects, and continues them under a government; nor is he faulty in doing so. 2. They are not, while under such a forbearance, capable of any other govern-

ment; for if once the Ruler of the world begin to deal in a way of force and justice with them, then this forbearance is at an end. 3. It were a manifest reproach to the Governor of the world, if they were supposed under no government at all. Besides, on this supposition, the ends of his forbearance could not be reached. And moreover, the moral dependence of creatures on their Creator, which can only be maintained either in this way, or by putting them under the penal sanction of the law, would be dissolved, which cannot be admitted.

8. Sinners under this dispensation are still under the law of creation: it is true this law can no longer be the means of conveying a title to the great and principal reward; but that is their own fault, and not the governor's, nor the laws'. But notwithstanding of this, they are still under it, and it continues the instrument of God's government over them. For 1. The ground of obedience still continues, although some of the motives, yea, the principal encouragement, I mean, eternal rewards, are forfeited. The obligation to obedience can never otherwise be dissolved, than by the inflicting of a capital punishment, which puts out of all possibility of yielding any obedience. Some, I know make the power and right of obliging, to consist merely in a power of rewarding and punishing: but this is easily convicted of falsehood: and although the learned Mr. *Gastrel* has advanced this, in his sermons at Boyle's Lecture, yet we have no reason to receive it, as *Beconsal* in his treatise of the *Law of Nature*, and others have sufficiently cleared. 2. This law is sufficient to answer the designs of this forbearance, and God's rule over them who live under it and by it. It has not lost its directive power; but it is able sufficiently to instruct, at least in these duties, either as to God, ourselves or others, that are of absolute necessity to keep some order and decorum in the world, carry on regularity, the propagation of mankind, and the like. It is manifestly sufficient to be a test to try men's willingness to obey, and convince men of wilfulness in their rebellion; and to be a standing monument of God's holiness; yea, it continues to have that force upon the consciences of the generality, as to be a check to keep them from running into enormities subversive of all order and society, and destructive to the other ends of God's patience. 2. Experience fully clears, that men still pay regard to this law, and this is the only law that men destitute of a revelation own.

9. While God saw meet to continue this forbearance, it was not necessary nor suitable, that he should plainly, particularly and solemnly intimate all the length he designed to carry his resentments against offenders. 1. There was no necessity of this towards the clearing of God's holiness; this being sufficiently done by the promulgation of the law, its penalty, and many particular examples. 2. This would have undone the dispensation whereof we have

been speaking. 3. This is utterly inconsistent with all the designs of it. Men had been driven into despair, and so all moral government had been dissolved.

10. Yea, it was consistent with his holiness, and suitable to his wisdom, to permit men to fall into sin, very great sins, and for a time to go on in them. God can neither do any thing that is unworthy, nor omit any thing that is worthy of him, of a moral kind. And it is certain in fact, that such sins and enormities he has permitted: and therefore, however strange it appears to us, that a holy God, who could have restrained, should permit those things; yet since he, who can do no evil, has done it, we must conclude this altogether consistent with his holiness. And it is manifestly so with his wisdom, since no injury is done to his holiness. For 1. By this means sinners give full proof, what a height their enmity against God is come to. 2. They are the fitter to exercise his own people. And 3. They are riper for the strokes he designs to inflict on them.

Notwithstanding of all this, it was meet and necessary that some offenders should be remarkably punished, and some bounds set to offences; and more especially those offences which cross the designs of God's forbearance, and tend to dissolve the government and order, which it was necessary God should maintain in the world. And hence it has come to pass, that not the greatest sins, such as these certainly are, which immediately strike against God, but these which strike against order and government, have been most remarkably punished in all ages, as might be made appear by innumerable instances of the remarkable punishment of murders, treasons, and undutifulness to parents. This is congruous to justice, not only on the abovementioned account, but on this, that the notices concerning these last sort of evils are much more clear in most instances, than those which respects the former.

12. It is every way suitable to the wisdom, sincerity and holiness of God; yea, and of absolute necessity to the design of this his forbearance, that he exercise bounty in lesser things; such as the good things of this life are: and that he vouchsafe those mental endowments to some of the spared sinners, which are necessary toward the maintenance of that government, which God was to keep up among them; such are civil wisdom, invention, courage, &c. These he may give without the least intimation of any design of special mercy. For what relation have these things to special mercy, which are heaped in abundance on the worst of men. However, that it was fit these things should be bestowed upon some in this case, is evident; because, 1. Eternal rewards are now forfeited, and there would have been nothing to induce to obedience if this had not been done. 2. Hereby he gives a witness to his own goodness, which aggravates offences committed against him.

3. Hereby he draws on men to obedience, or rather to do those pieces of service, which are in their own nature, such as he allows and requires, although they design not his service, but their own pleasure and profit. 4. Hereby he clears scores with sinners, while he suffers not what is even but pretended service, to pass without a reward, which is sufficient to shew what a kind rewarder he would have been, if they had indeed obeyed. 5. Hereby he cuts off all excuse for their continuance in disobedience. 6. This conduct gives them an innocent occasion of discovering latent wickedness, which otherwise they would have had no access to shew, and keeps from that utter despair which would have marred the design of God's forbearance.

13. These vouchsafements of divine bounty lead to a sort of repentance; not that to which the promise of pardon is joined in the gospel. For 1. They give eminent discoveries of the goodness of that God whom we have offended, and consequently of the folly of offending him, which naturally leads to sorrow or regret. 2. They strengthen, as all benefits do, the original obligation to obedience. 3. They let us see, that obedience is not altogether fruitless, since they may expect less severe resentments if they return; yea, may expect some share in this bounty, and are not under an impossibility of mercy, for any thing they can know.

14. After all, I do yet see no reason to think, that they who are merely under such a dispensation as this, which I take to be the case of the Heathen world, are under a law of grace; which assures, that upon a return to former obedience, sins shall be entirely pardoned, and they have access to eternal rewards. I grant it highly probable, that if God had not intended grace to some, such a dispensation had never been granted. I admit, that this dispensation is subservient to a design of grace upon some. I further allow, that there is no absolute impossibility of the salvation of persons, however deeply guilty, who are not yet under the penalty: but if they are saved, it must be by some means or way revealed by God, and superadded to all the former, which I can never see to amount to any law of grace, since it is manifest, 1. That all this may be exercised toward them whom God in the end designs everlastingly to punish. He exercises *much long-suffering to the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.* 2. There is nothing in the whole dispensation, that in the least intimates any purpose of God to pass by former offences, either absolutely or upon condition. 3. In fact it has never been found, that ever this dispensation has led any one to that sincere repentance, which must be allowed necessary, in order to pardon. And, I dare not say, that God ever did appoint means for such an end, which after so long a trial should never answer it. 4. All whom God has pardoned, or of whom we may say, that he has brought them to repentance, have been

brought by other means. So that upon the whole, I see no ground for asserting an universal law of grace.

As what has been above said, takes off the principal pretence for such an universal law of grace, which some seem so fond of; so if any such is asserted, it must be owned to be a law of a very universal tenor, as being that wherein all mankind are concerned. It must be allowed a law designed to take off the force of the original law, concreated with our nature, that necessarily results from the nature of God and man, and their natural relation, at least as to one instance, I mean the penal sanction, in case of sin. It must be allowed to be a law not merely directive as to duty, but designed to tender undeserved favors to sinful man. Now he that can think a few, (or call them many) dubious actions, that is, actions capable of another, yea, contrary construction, a sufficient promulgation of such a law, as is of so universal extent, as derogates, at least in one instance, of so great moment, from a law so firmly and solemnly established, without any known provision for its honor, injured by so many sins; and finally that tenders such great favors to the transgressors of it, may believe what he pleases. I must own, this one consideration is with me enough to sink that notion.

But to conclude this whole matter, upon which we have dwelt so long. Upon the nicest survey of occurrences in the Heathen world, I can see nothing that savours of any acquaintance with that forgiveness that is with God; unless it is that generally entertained notion of the *placability* of their deities. This notion, I make no doubt, had its rise from *revelation*, and was continued by *tradition*. And several things did concur to the preservation of this, while other notices that had the same rise were lost; the apparent necessity of it to man in his present sinful condition; the suitableness of it to lay a foundation for that worship, to which the remaining natural notices of a Deity urged them, and which was of indispensible necessity toward the support of human government; the darkness and blindness of men as to the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the holiness of God's nature, and the strong inclination all men have to be favourable, even to their faults, did contribute not a little toward its support. Finally, this placability did not so much respect the one true God, of whom they had very little knowledge, as their own fictitious deities, which they put in the room of the true God. And it is obvious, that when men took upon them to set up gods, they would be sure to frame such as might agree with their own apprehensions, and pass by their faults with as little difficulty as they committed them. Whatever there is as to this, we have no reason to think that this is a natural notice, it being neither self-evident, nor certainly deducible from principles that are such.

CHAP. XI.

Proving the Insufficiency of Natural Religion to eradicate our Inclinations to Sin, or to subdue its Power.

I THINK we have said enough to demonstrate the *insufficiency of natural religion*, to satisfy us as to the way how we may obtain the *removal of guilt* or the *pardon of sin*. Let us now see whether it is able to remove the *corruption of nature*, and subdue or eradicate our inclinations to sin.

Before we enter directly on this, it will not be impertinent, if it is not plainly necessary, that we say somewhat concerning the *nature of this corruption*. We shall therefore offer the few following hints concerning it.

It is most certain, that man has corrupt inclinations. I think this will scarce be denied; since it is beyond contradiction evident, that the bulk of mankind in all ages, have run headlong into those courses which reason condemns as contrary to the law, under which we are made. The law condemns, reason justifies the law, and proclaims those courses unworthy of us; conscience checks and sometimes torments, and yet sinners run on. Can all this be without corrupt inclinations swaying, yea, as it were, forcibly driving that way? Not surely.

2. It is certain, that not only there are such inclinations in man, but that they are exceedingly strong and forcible. Our own reason condemns those actions, and cries shame on the sinner's conscience, presages the resentments of the righteous God, the evil effects of them are visible, and they are felt to be destructive to our health, ruinous to our reputation and estates, inconsistent with our inward peace; yea, in a few instances, human law provides terrible punishments: and yet, in spite of all these strong barriers, we are carried down with the stream: nor can the most rational considerations, from interest, honor or prudence, stop our career. Certainly the force of inclination, that carries over all these, must be great.

3. It seems plainly natural and congenial to us. I shall not nicely inquire in what sense it is so. I am far from thinking, that our natures as at first made, were created with it. I have said enough before to prove this impossible: but I mean, that as our natures now are, however they came to be so, it is an inseparable appendage of them, cleaves to them, and proceeds not merely from custom, and is not acquired, though it is often improved by custom. Now this seems evident from many things, 1. The universality of it. All men, in all ages, in all places, and in all circumstances, have such vicious inclinations. I do not say that eve-

ry individual is proud, ambitious, covetous, revengeful, passionate and lustful. No, but every one has some one or other of these, or the like breaking out: which says the spring is within, and is strong; though the constitution of our bodies, the climates we live under, our education and circumstances of life, have dammed in some of them, and cut out channels for others of them. Now it is plainly unaccountable how all men should be thus corrupt, if not naturally so. No parallel instance, in any sort, can be given, where any thing not natural and congenial, at least as to its principle and inclination, has obtained such an universal sway. 2. It waits not till we are grown and framed by education, custom, engagement and inventions; but makes strong, discernible, and sensible eruptions in infancy and childhood. As soon as we are capable, and very oft, while one would think us scarcely so, by reason of age, we are proud, revengeful, covetous, &c. which says this is congenial. 3. It is often seen, that these corruptions break out in our younger years, which neither education, example, circumstances, nor any thing else but a corrupted nature, can give any encouragement to. 4. Yea more, how strong are these inclinations, and that very early, which are discouraged, opposed, borne down, and have all outward occasions cut off from them. One is passionate among calm people, though he is punished for it and secs it not. Another is ambitious and proud among sober people, in mean circumstances, where there is no example to excite ambition, no theatre to act it upon, and the beginnings are curbed by precept, instruction, reproof, chastisements and example. 5. Those things are evidently interwoven with, and strengthened by the very constitutions of our bodies, and climates under which we live. Hence there are domestic and national vices, which cleave to some families and nations. 6. The best, the most sober, and freest from discernible eruptions of corruption, still own they find their inclinations strong, and driving them into indiscernible acts correspondent to them. 7. They who deny the force and being of these inclinations, and who pretend that the will of man is able to master all these, yet cannot but own, that there are such inclinations; and as for the pretended ability of the will to conquer them, they give the least proof of it who pretend most to it: for if the will is thus able, and if, as they pretend, they have sufficient moral arguments which persuade to it, why is it not done? What stops it? 8. I shall only further offer the testimonies of some few among the Heathens. *Timæus* the *Locrian*, who lived before Plato, tells us in his discourses, "That vitiosity comes from our parents "and first principles, rather than from negligence and disorder of public manners; because we never part from those actions which lead us to imitate the primitive sins of our parents."* Plato tells us,

* Gale's Court of the Gentiles, Part 4. Lib. 1. Cap. 4. Par. 2.

that, "In times past the divine nature flourished in men; but at "length it mixed with mortal, and ἀνθρωπινον νοσον, human corrup- "tions prevailed to the ruin of mankind: and from this source there "followed an inundation of evils on men. Hence he calls corruption "νοσον των κατα φυσιν, the natural disease, or disease of nature, be- "cause the nature of mankind is greatly degenerated and deprav- "ed, and all manner of disorders infest human nature: and men "being impotent, are torn in pieces by their own lusts, as by so "many wild horses. Hence Democritus is said to affirm the dis- "eases of the soul to be so great, that if it were opened, it would "appear to be a sepulchre of all manner of evils." Aristotle tells us, "That there is in us somewhat naturally repugnant to right "reason, πεφυκεν αντιβατον τω λογω."* Seneca, Epist. 50, gives us a very remarkable account of his thoughts in this matter. The whole were worthy to be transcribed, but it is too long. I shall translate a part of it. "Why do we deceive ourselves? Our "evil is not from without; it is fixed in our very bowels. *Alibi*† "All sins are in all men, but all do not appear in each man: he "that hath one sin—hath all. We say, that all men are intem- "perate, avaricious, luxurious, malignant; not that these sins ap- "pear in all; but because they may be, yea, are in all, although "latent. A man may be guilty, though he do no hurt. Sins are "perfect before they break forth into effect." It is worthy of our observation, what Mr. Gale tells us, after he has quoted these words, viz. that *Jansenius* breaks forth into a rapture upon hearing these philosophers philosophize more truly about the corruption of man's nature, than Pelagians and others of late.

But the *Oracles of Reason* tell us, that it is denied "that the "lapse of nature is universal, because some through the course of "their lives, have proved more inclinable or prone to virtue than "to vice." I have spoken to this before, but I add, 1. This is not enough, that they are more prone to virtue than to vice: for the question is, Whether they have inclinations to vice? and not, Whether they contrary are stronger? 2. This cannot be pretend- ed to be the case with many. Now, since the question is about a religion sufficient for all mankind, if any of them have such a dis- temper, and natural religion provide no cure, it is insufficient. 3. It is not, Whether there are men that have been prone to some virtues, and averse from some vices, possibly scandalous sins? But, Whether there have been men inclined to no sin, prone to all virtue? If they assert such a one, shew us the man. We can- not believe any such, since all we know are otherwise, till we see him produced. 4. It is not the business whether men have done virtuous acts ordinarily, that is, the material acts of virtue: for

* Arist. Ethick, Lib. 1. Cap. 13. † "Elsewhere."

corruption may run freely out in this channel. A man may be ambitious, proud, and live among persons, with whom vice is decried, open vice I mean, and therefore affect a great exactness as to morality. This is good: but this is all but a sacrifice to ambition. One lust is the principal idol, all the rest are sacrificed to it. Corruption turns not troublesome, and is pleased, if it get vent any way. A strong spring, if it can get a vent under ground, may press for a vent above; yet it will easily be restrained there.

Now this being the case plainly with man, it is impossible for him to reach happiness, while this corruption remains; nor can he be sure of acceptance with God. While things are thus, nature is imperfect, man is out of order, reason, the nobler part, is kept under, and passions, the brutal part, bear the sway. This is more unseemly, than to see *servants on horses, while princes walk on foot*. There is continual occasion for remorse, checks, challenges of conscience, and fears of the resentment of a holy God. There can be no firm confidence of access to God, or near fellowship with him, while we entertain his enemies in our bosom; nay, have them interwoven, as it were, with our natures.

The Deists I know make a horrible outcry against Christians, for asserting this corruption of nature. Herbert in his book *de Veritate*, has many bitter invectives against the asserters of it; and yet, overcome with the evidence of truth, he is obliged frequently to acknowledge it plainly: yea, not only does he acknowledge it, but he pleads this directly, in excuse of the most abominable wickedness. After he has told us, that the temperament or constitution of our bodies have a powerful influence to sway us to some sins, he subjoins: *Quo pacto haud ita levi negotio damnan-* "*dos existimo, qui ex ἰδιοσυγκρασια aliqua prævaricantur. Quem* "*admodum igitur flagitii haud juste argueris lethargum, desi-* "*dem, aut hydropicum, bibacem; ita fortasse neque veneris, aut* "*Martis œstro percitum modo in peccantium humorum redun-* "*dantiam, potius quam pravum aliquem habitum, delictum com-* "*modo rejici possit. Neque tamen me hic conscelerati cujusvis* "*patronum sisto; sed in id solummodo contendo, ut mitiori sen-* "*tentia de iis statuamus, qui corporea, brutali, & tantum non ne-* "*cessaria propensione in peccata prolabuntur.*"* Well, here is a

* "Therefore I think that those are not so easily to be condemned who "sin from any peculiarity of bodily constitution. As, therefore, one could "not justly blame a lethargic person for being lazy, or a dropsical person for "being desirous of drink; so, perhaps, we ought not to blame any one that "is prompted to sin by the sting of lust or anger, provided that his sin may "be conveniently charged to the redundancy of peccant humours, rather "than to any perverse habit. And here I do not set myself up as the advo-"cate of every wicked man, but only contend for this, that we should judge "more mildly of those who fall into sins, from a corporeal, brutal, and al-"most necessary inclination."

handsome excuse for vice. We must be as far from condemning him, who, prompted by passion, slays and murders, or hurried on by lust, commits rapes and adulteries; as of censuring him who is sick of a lethargy, for his laziness and indisposition to act; or one that is hydropic, for his immoderate thirst. This divinity will highly please profane men. The salvo he subjoins is very frivolous, and deserves rather contempt than an answer. But to leave this, it is plain there are such inclinations, and that if they are not rooted out we are undone. What though men might have hopes, if they but erred once, that they might easily obtain remission; yet sure it must confound them, when they still sin on, and that out of inclination. Unless therefore natural religion is able to cure this disease, and eradicate those inclinations, it serves to no valuable purpose, at least it is insufficient as to the great ends of religion, our own happiness or acceptance with God. And that really it cannot do so, will be clear by the following considerations.

1. If this corruption is congenial with our nature, as the above-mentioned arguments go near to demonstrate, and the Christian religion fully proves, it is evident, that there must be some change wrought upon our natures. Now this is more than natural religion can pretend to, which knows nothing of regeneration, and the sanctifying work of the spirit of grace. I know Plato and some others have talked of *inspiration*, and some *aids* of God: but this was all but chat, amusement, and a few tinkling words, which might please the ears; but what evidence could they give, that any such thing was attained, or attainable!

2. Though this were given up; yet of whatever nature this corruption and impotency is, call it natural or moral, it is certain, that it is strong; natural religion cannot give sufficient security that it is practicable to eradicate it. We know that some streams of this corruption may be dammed in, some of the top branches lopped off, and some of the fruits of it may be plucked. This, in so far as it is done, is good for mankind, and useful in society. Some of the philosophers have gone a great way in it, and thereby have shamed most who are called Christians. But what is all this to the eradicating of corruption, purifying the minds of men, and universal conformity in heart to the rule of duty? The attainments of philosphers need not here be talked of: their virtues were but shows, and the shadows of them. Search to the bottom, and you will find, that what they called self-denial, was only a piece of delicate interest in order to reach self-ends: it was but a parting of one thing pleasant to ourselves, to gain a greater, which is selfishness in the extreme. As for that self-denial, which Christianity teaches, it was not heard of, or known in the least. Liberality was but a mere parade of pride, which values no gifts, provided

it have the glory of being liberal; modestly was the art of concealing our vanity; civility, but an affected preference of other men before ourselves, to conceal how much we value ourselves, above all the world; bashfulness, but an affected silence in those things, which lusts make men think of with pleasure; benevolence or the desire of obliging other men, but a secret desire of serving ourselves, by getting them to befriend us at other times; gratitude, but an impatience to acquit ourselves of an obligation, with a shamefacedness. for having been too long beholden to others, for some favor received. So that all these pretended virtues, in general, have only been so many guards made use of by self-love, to prevent our darling and secret vices from appearing outwardly. All these are no evidences, what may be done towards the removal of corrupt inclinations. Nor indeed can nature's light satisfy us that it is practicable. Can it shew us the man that has done it? This were somewhat to the purpose, could he be named. But this cannot be. Will it tell us that we have a power to do it? But this is somewhat that we see and find by experience, the strongest and most convincing of all arguments, not to be true. We find we may restrain or forbear some outward actions, but we have no experience of a power to lay aside or divest ourselves of inclinations so deeply rooted. Besides, they, who talk of this power, whereof others have no experience, are liable to be questioned upon several things which they cannot fairly or satisfyingly answer. Why do not they more than others who find it not, but complain of the want of this power, shew that those inclinations are eradicated which they own should be laid aside, which they assert they have a power to lay aside, and which they say they have been long trying to overcome? The world will be forward to judge, at least, the thinking part of mankind will be so, that they are rather misled by some fond speculations to judge they have a power that they really want, than that this practical proof should fail, which seems scarce capable of an answer.

Now will men be effectually engaged in a work so difficult, which they are never like to bring to an issue? Will they not rather choose to yield to the conqueror than engage in a war that must last while they last, and that without prospect of conquest and being masters in the end? Yea, have they not done so? Who will be induced to such an undertaking without encouragement?

3. If this is practicable, yet it must be owned extremely difficult, and what men will not easily be engaged in. Inclinations are deeply rooted, strengthened by custom, and in most heightened by temptations, whereof the world is full. Now if natural religion is supposed able to persuade to such an undertaking, it must be

well furnished with strong motives and inducements. Whence shall those be fetched? From the rewards of virtue, and the punishment of vice on the other side of time? We heard how short the accounts of nature's light of these are. The impressions of these were always more deeply rooted in the vulgar, than in the philosophers; yet they had no such effect. It is plain, outward encouragements do not attend the practice of virtue. There remains only then the beauty of virtue itself. Of this the philosophers have talked wonderful things. But the mischief of it is, it was but talk. When they missed other things, they could, even with their dying breath, as Brutus, one of the *adepti*,* is said to have done, call virtue but an empty name. They lived otherwise than they talked, the best of them not excepted. It is excellently said by the ingenious Claudian,

> Ipsa quidem virtus pretium sibi solaque late
> Fortunæ secura nitet, nec fascibus ullis
> Erigitur, plausuve petit clarescere vulgi.
> Nil opis externi cupiens, nil indignæ laudis,
> Divitiis animosa suis, immotaque cunctis
> Casibus, ex alta mortalia despicit arce.*

This is indeed very prettily said; but this is all. Men may please themselves with refined speculations of the excellency of virtue: but it is not this alone that can sway corrupt man. It is not the question what virtue really is? But what men think of it, and can be made to see in it? And it is certain, all the philosophers could never persuade the world of it; and no wonder, for they could not persuade themselves. Mankind have had other thoughts, and it must be other views than nature can give, that will beat them out of this. Another poet plainly opens the case:

> Turpe quidem dictu (sed si modo vera fatemur)
> Vulgus amicitias utilitate probat:
> Cura quid expediat prior est, quam quid sit honestum,
> Et cum fortuna statque caditque fides.
> Nec facile invenies multis in millibus unum,
> Virtutem pretium qui putat esse suum.
> Ipse decor recti, facti si præmia desint,
> Non movet, & gratis pœnitet esse probum.†

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* "Perfect."

† De Consulatu Mallii Theodoriabi Initio.—"Virtue indeed is its own reward, and it alone shines far and wide, regardless of fortune; nor is it elevated by any power, or desires to become famous by the applause of the croud, having no desire of outward help, nor any need of praise. Bold in its own riches, and immoveable by all accidents, it looks down on mortal things from a high eminence."

* Ovid. de Ponto, Lib. 2. Eleg. 3.—"It is indeed scandalous to relate, but if we will only confess the truth, the multitude approves of friendship only for interest; the case of what is profitable is prior to the case of what is honorable, and their fidelity stands or falls with fortune; nor will you easi-

Here is the true state of the case. But to come closely up to the point; this beauty of virtue is not discernible till we have made some progress in it. While corrupt inclinations are in their vigor in the heart, such a beauty is not easily seen. 2. It is a beauty too fine to be perceived by vulgar eyes, or indeed by any, without deeper and nicer consideration, than most of men can go to the charge of. 3. Alone it is not sufficient to support and carry on in so hazardous an undertaking. This advantage is not to be felt till the virtue be obtained. It is a question whether it will be obtained. So that it is plain, natural religion wants motives to engage effectually to this.

4. It is still further considerable to this purpose, that these vicious inclinations are strong, if not strongest, in those who have neither capacity to dive into those few refined considerations, which enforce the practice of virtue, and the subduing of corruption, nor indeed to understand them when proposed, nor have they time or leisure to attend to the discourses of the philosophers where they are taught, or money to purchase them. And natural religion provides no teachers, at least if we take it according to the accounts that we get from the Deists, who bear such a terrible grudge to a *standing ministry*, and have so oft in their mouths that reflection of Dryden, "Priests of all religions are the same." Now what a sad case are poor men in, who are solicited by outward temptations and pushed on by strong inclinations, and have so small assistance given them by natural religion.

5. As motives are wanting, so the work is not easily carried on, the way of management is difficult, and the directions given us by the philosophers or others, are exceedingly unsatisfactory. Some of them are impossible, such as the entire laying aside our affections; others of them ridiculous, such as that direction abovementioned out of Plato, for the purification of our souls by music and mathematics, &c. Others, and indeed most of them, only tell us what we are to do, bid us do the thing, but tell us not how to set about it; some of them only tell us how to conceal inward corruption, or divert it. And, perhaps, I should not say amiss, if I should say, that what the best moral philosophers either aimed at or attained, was only to dam in corruption on one side, to let it run out at another; or to make that run in a secret channel, which run open before. It were long to examine their several directions. The learned Herbert gives us a summary of them, which I shall here present the reader with. 1. *We should suppress all our vitious affections.* This is but to advise the thing, without telling us how it is to be done. 2. *That we expiate our sins by deep re-*

" ly find one among many thousands, who thinks that virtue is its own reward. " The beauty of virtue by itself does not move them, if rewards are wanting, " and they grudge to be honest for nothing."

pentance, and by the instituted sacrifices or rites. This is only a remedy for guilt, and an ill one too, as has been cleared above. 3. *That we avoid the society of evil men.* But then *we must go out of the world*, or at least out of the heathen world. 4. *That we use the company of good men.* But where shall we find them amongst those, who have no more but natural religion? 5. *That we inquire carefully what is to be done, and what is not to be done;* but the question is, when we know it, How shall we get the one avoided and the other followed, considering we have a strong aversion to good, and inclination to evil? 6. *That our sins, which arise from human frailty, should be corrected or laid aside.* But still the question occurs, How is this to be done? 7. *That we should use supplications and prayers to the gods, as the priests prescribe.* But for what, and upon what grounds? And what will this help the matter?

6. To conclude this argument, the universal experience of mankind bears testimony to the weakness of natural religion. Nothing in this matter was ever done, or done to purpose, save where revelation prevailed. Should we narrowly scan the lives, not of the vulgar, but of the Heathen philosophers, as Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Plutarch, Cato and Brutus, we might easily pull off the mask, and discover how little it was that they attained in this matter, or rather nothing at all. Yea, even a Socrates himself would not be able to stand before an impartial inquirer. I believe he could not give a good account of his amours, and those practical instructions, which he is said to have given his scholar Alcibiades. He repressed well the vanity and pride of other philosophers: but perhaps, nay I need not say perhaps, with greater pride; yea even his death, the most applauded part of his whole conduct, might be unmasked, and deprived of the unjust eulogies, which some have made on it, who, it may be, never read the accounts we have of it, or seriously considered his carriage on that occasion. It is true, he was unjustly put to death, and behaved very resolutely, but whether he fell not a sacrifice to his own pride, as much as to the malice of his enemies, may be questioned. This I say not to detract from those great men, whom I admire, considering their state; but to shew, that they went not so high as some would have us believe.

In fine, till revealed religion appeared, nothing was seen in the world, of true piety or religion, of mortification of sin, or holiness of life. The natural notices could never make one pious, or indeed moral. Whereas Christianity, upon its first appearance, in a moment, as it were, made millions so. And they who have rejected it, and set up for Heathenism again, under the new, but injurious name of Deism, are no friends to holiness of life, piety towards God, sobriety in their own way, nor righteousness among

men. What mighty saints do Blount, Hobbes, Spinoza, Uriel, Accosta and others make?

I designed to have proceeded further, to demonstrate the insufficiency of natural religion to answer the *ends of religion*, by the consideration of its insufficiency to support under the *troubles of life*, or amongst the *terrors of death;* but upon second thoughts I judged, after what has been said, it was not needful. Besides, if any look but at it, they may easily see it utterly insufficient to this purpose, as it is indeed to the other great ends of religion.

If the well-founded prospect of future rewards, and a clear knowledge of the nature and excellency of *things eternal* and *not seen*, the present intimations of divine love, in cross dispensations, the supports of divine powerful grace under them, the usefulness of those calamities, by virtue of divine ordination and concurrent influence of the divine Spirit, verified in the experience of the sufferers, are laid aside, as natural religion does, which knows nothing of these, all that men can say to comfort under affliction, or arm against the horrors of death, is but an unprofitable amusement, or at least, like rattles and other toys we give to children, that do not in the least ease them of the pain they are under; but do for a little, divert the mind, while they are looked at; but as soon as the first impression is over, which those new toys make on the mind, the sense of pain recurs again, with that redoubled force, which it always has, when it immediately succeeds either ease or want of sense. And if it is really violent, these things will not avail, no not to divert trouble for a little. It is but a sorry comfort to tell me, that others are troubled as well as I, or worse; that death, which I fear, will end it; that I must bear it; that I have other enjoyments, which yet present pain will not allow me to relish. Yet such are the best consolations that *natural religion* affords.

CHAP. XII.

Wherein the Proof of the Insufficiency of Natural Religion is concluded from a general View of the Experience of the World.

AS a conclusion to, and illustration of what has hitherto been discoursed, for demonstrating the *insufficiency* of *natural religion*, I shall here offer a *six-fold* view of the *experience* of the world in general, without descending to particular instances, which have in part been touched at, and offered before, and are every where to be met with.

1. Let us view man as a creature made for this end, to *glorify God and enjoy him*, abstracting from the consideration of his corruption, which the Deists sometimes deny, and sometimes with difficulty, do but in part admit. And let us consider him as left to pursue this noble end, in the use of his rational faculties, under the conduct of the mere light of nature: If we consider him thus, and inquire into the experience of the world, how far he has reached this end, we shall find such an account, as will much confirm the truth we have hitherto asserted, and weaken the credit of the Deists' imaginary sufficiency of nature's light to conduct man to the end for which he was made.

If we look to the generality of mankind, we shall find them in a posture much like that wherein the prophet saw the princes in the vision, with *their backs* to the chief end, never once thinking for what they were made, pursuing other things; every one as lust led him, following his own humor, walking in a direct and open contradiction to that law, which was originally designed for the guide of our life, and the directory to bliss, that happiness, which all would have, though they know not where to find it.

If we look at the philosophers, we may see them *sitting up late, rising early, eating the bread of carefulness*, wearying themselves in the search of happiness, running into hundreds of different notions about it, and yet not one of them hitting, or at least understanding the true one; and as little agreed about the way to it.—We may hear them talk of virtue, but never levelling it at its proper end, *the glory of God*. We may hear them urging its practice, but not upon the proper grounds. Rarely any regard to the authority of God, the only formal ground of obedience. Instead of plain rules useful to mankind, they obtrude cryptic and dark sentences, rather designed to make others admire them, than to be useful to any. They every where tack their own fancies to the divine law, a weight sufficient to sink it as to its truth, in the apprehensions of men, or at least, as to its usefulness. They offer a rule defective in most things of moment, corrupt in many, ruining in not a few instances, destitute of any other authority than their own say, or *ipse dixit*, unintelligible to the generality, and naked as to inducements to obey it.

2. Let us consider man as made for this end, but barred from its attainment, by the interposition of those great hinderances and rubs which now are certainly in its way; I mean darkness, guilt and corruption. These are stones in the way. How has nature's light acquitted itself as to the rolling them away? Truly they have been like Sysiphus's stone, as fast as they have rolled them up, as fast they have recoiled and fallen back on them.

As to that darkness that has overspread the minds of men, if we look at the generality, we find them like blind men, content to

jog on in the dark, mired every where, stumbling frequently, and falling sometimes dangerously; yet satisfied with their case, not looking after light: not so much because they want it not, as because they have no notion of it, or its usefulness; like blind men that never saw the sun, and therefore suffer the loss of it with less regret, than they who once saw, but now have lost their eyes.—They follow as they are led; are ready to take hold of any hand, though of one as blind as themselves, and are never sensible of the mistake, till sunk where they cannot get out again. The philosophers indeed seem a little more sensible of their case, and fancying truth to be hid in Democritus's well, dive for it, but lose their breath before they come at it, and fall into dangerous eddies or whirlpools, where they lose themselves instead of finding truth; or trying to fetch it up, but with a line too short, they fetch up some weeds that are nourished by their nearness to the waters, and please themselves with those. After all their painful endeavors we find them groping in the dark, as to all useful and necessary knowledge of God, or the way of worshipping him;—of ourselves, our happiness, our sins, the way of obtaining pardon, our duty or our corruption.

As to guilt, if we look at the case of mankind, and their endeavors for the removal of it, we find the most part drowned in endless despair or fatal security; like men at their wit's end, trying all ways that fear, superstition, or racked imagination can supply, and still unsatisfied with their own inventions, they are ready to try all ways that self-designing men, or even the Devil can suggest to them, sparing no cost, no travel, no pain. They stand not to give *the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.* The philosophers either think, through their pride, they have no sin, because they are not quite so bad as the vulgar; or, if they still retain some sense of sin, they are driven into the utmost perplexity, being convinced of the wickedness of the measures taken by the vulgar, or at least of their uselessness and impertinency, and yet unable to find out better; they try to divert their thoughts from a sore they know no plaister for.

As to corruption, we find all confessing it, crying out of the disease; and indeed it is rather because it cannot be hid,—the sore runs, than because it is painful to many. The generality despair of stemming the tide, and finding it easiest to swim with the stream, are willingly carried headlong. The body of philosophers are indeed like weak watermen on a strong stream, they look one way but are carried another. Though they pretend they aim at the ruining of vice, yet really they do it no hurt, save that they speak against it. A few of the best of them being ashamed to be found amongst the rest, swimming, or rather carried down the stream

on the surface, that is, in open vice, have dived to the bottom; but really made as much way under water as the others above.

3. Let us view mankind under the goodness and forbearance of God, these helps which some think sufficient. These words are used, or rather abused, as a blind in a matter of very great importance; and men who use them will scarce tell, if they can, even in the subject of the present discourse, in what sense they use them. But let it be as it will, some pretend the works of providence, particularly God's goodness and forbearance sufficient. Well, let us see the experience of the world in this.

If we view mankind under this consideration, we may see them so far from being led to repentance, that most part never once took notice of this conduct of God. Others, and they not a few, have abused it to the worst purposes. *Because judgment against an evil work,* has not been *speedily executed,* therefore their *hearts* were *wholly set in them to do evil.* The more inquisitive have raised a charge against God as encouraging wickedness. And as for the favors they enjoyed themselves, they looked on them, not as calls to repentance, but as rewards for their pretended virtues, and scanty ones too, below the worth of them. Not a few of them have gone near to arraign God of injustice, for lesser afflictions they were visited with; while others have been entangled and tossed to and fro by cross appearances. So that none have by this *goodness of God* been led to *repentance.*

4. Let us view man living in the place where revelation obtains, or where the Christian religion is professed and taught, but renouncing and rejecting it, and in profession owning only natural religion: Such are the Deists among us. If we consider their words, they talk indeed that natural religion is sufficient; and to make it indeed appear so, some of them have adorned it with jewels borrowed from the temple of God, ascribing to nature's light discoveries in religion, which originally were owing to revelation, and were never dreamed of where it did not obtain: though being once discovered, they have gained the consent of sober reason. But now we are not considering the speech, but the power of these men; not what they say of the sufficiency of natural religion, but what real experience they have of it, and what evidence they give of this in their practice.

If we thus consider them, we find, that although when they have a mind to impose their notion of the sufficiency of natural religion upon others, they pretend, that it is clear, as to a great many points or principles, that are confessedly of the greatest moment in religion; yet when they begin to speak more plainly and freely their own inward sentiments, they shew that they are not fixed, no not about the very principles themselves, even these of them which are of the greatest consequence. Mr. Gildon,

publisher of the *Oracles of Reason*, is not far from asserting two anti-gods, the one good the other evil; and so falls in with the Persians.* Blount favours the opinion of Ocellus Lucanus, about the *world's eternity*, and consequently denies, or at least hesitates about *creation*.† The *immateriality of the soul* seems to be flatly rejected by them all. Nor do they seem very firm as to its *immortality*. In short, after they have been at so much pains to trim up natural religion, and make it look sufficient-like, they yet express a hesitation about its *sufficiency to eternal life*.‡ We have heard Herbert to this purpose already. Blount, in a letter to Dr. Sydenham, prefixed to the *Deist's Reasons*, says plainly, that it is not safe to trust Deism alone, without Christianity joined to it. And the Deist's hope is summed up in this, in the 4th chap. of the *Summary of the Deist's Reasons*, That "there is more probability of his salvation, than of the credulous and ill-living Papist;"|| and that is just none at all.

Nor does their practice give one jot of a better proof of the sufficiency of that religion which they profess: yea, it affords convincing evidence of its weakness, uselessness, and utter insufficiency. Their lives shew that they are not in earnest about any thing in religion. They are Latitudinarians in practice. Their words, their actions, have no savour of a regard to a Deity; but they go on in all manner of impieties in practice, and perhaps in the end, put a period to a wretched life by their own hands, as Blount, Uriel, Acosta and others have done, and the survivors justify the deed, upon trifling and childish reasonings; as not knowing but they may one day be put to use the same shift. I am not in the least deterred from asserting this, by the commendations that the publisher of the *Oracles of Reason* gives to Mr. Blount, as a person remarkable for virtue.** If a profane, jocular, and unbecoming treatment of the gravest and most important truths that belong, even by his own acknowledgment, to natural religion; yea, and are the principal props of it; and if gross and palpable disingenuity be instances of that virtue that he ascribes to him, and evidences of those *just and adequate notions of the Deity*, in which he says Mr. Blount was *bred up*, I could give instances enough from the book itself of such virtues: But I love not to *rake in the ashes of the dead*. Again, others of the Deists, having wearied themselves in chace of a phantom to no purpose, and having neither the grace nor ingenuity to return to the religion they abandoned, either land in downright Atheism in principle and practice, or they throw themselves into the arms of the pretended infallible guide; and

* Oracles of Reason, page 194, 212, 228.
† Ibid, 154, 187.
‡ Ibid, 117, 127.
|| Oracles of Reason, at the beginning, account of Blount's life.—** Ibid.

thereby give evidence how well founded the Jesuitical maxim is, *Make a man once an Atheist, he will soon turn Papist.*

5. Let us view men living under the gospel, embracing it in profession, but unacquainted with that Spirit that gives *life* and *power* to its doctrines, precepts, promises, threats and ordinances. They, besides that they are possessed of all the advantages of nature's light, have moreover the superadded advantages of revelation, and its institutions. They have ministers and parents instructing them, and discipline to restrain them, they are trained up in the faith of future rewards, and instructed in the nature and excellency of them, for their encouragement; they have punishments proposed to them to deter them from sin, which they profess to believe; yet if we consider the practice of the generality of such persons, it gives a sufficient evidence, that all this is not enough. Who but a man blind or foolish can then dote so far as to pretend nature's light alone sufficient, when it is not so, even when helped by so many accessory improvements?

If we consider the experience of them who have received the gospel in truth, and felt its power, we find they have indeed reached the ends of religion in part, and have a fair prospect as to further success. Well, what is their sense of the sufficiency of nature's light? Why, if you observe them in their public devotions, you shall hear heavy out-cries of their own darkness, weakness and wickedness; you may hear serious prayers for divine light, and life to quicken them, strengthen and incline them to follow duty, and support them in it, against the power of temptations, which they own themselves unable to master, without the powerful aids of divine grace. If you follow them into their retirements, where the matter is managed betwixt God and them alone, where they are under none of these temptations, to maintain the credit of any received notions, and therefore must be presumed to speak out the practical sense of the state of their case, without any disguise; there you shall find nothing but deep confessions of guilt, darkness and inability, with earnest cries, prayers and tears, for supplies of grace: and what they attain in matters of religion, you shall find them freely owning, that it was not *they* but the *grace of God* in them that brought them to this. And the more that any is concerned about religion, or know and has attained in it, still you will find him the more sensible of this state of things.

This is but a hint of what might have been said: but I have rather chosen to offer a general scheme of the argument from *experience*, which every one, from his own private reading and observation, may illustrate with observations and particular instances, than to insist upon it at large, which would have required a volume.

CHAP. XIII.

Wherein we make a transition to the Deist's Pleas for their opinion, and take particular Notice of the Articles to which they reduce their Catholic Religion, give some Account of Baron Herbert, the first Inventor of this Catholic Religion, his Books, and particularly of that which is inscribed De Religione Gentilium, *as to the Matter and Scope of it, and the Importance of what is therein attempted to the Deist's Cause.*

WE have now proposed and confirmed our own opinion; our next business is to inquire more particularly into that of the Deists, and consider what they offer for it.

The first set of Deists, so far as I can learn, did satisfy themselves with the rejection of all supernatural revelation, and a general pretence, that natural religion was sufficient, without telling the world of what articles it did consist, what belonged thereto, or how far it went. The learned lord *Herbert* was the first who did cultivate this notion, and dressed Deism, and brought it to something of a form. This honor he assumes to himself, glories in it, and we see no ground to dispute this with him. I have met with nothing in any of the modern Deists that makes towards this subject. which is not advanced by him, and probably borrowed from his writings. It will not therefore be impertinent to give the reader some account of him.

This *Edward Herbert* was a descendant from a younger brother of the family of Pembroke. He was brother to the famous George Herbert, the divine poet. His education was at Oxford, where he was for some time a fellow Commoner in University College there. After he left the University, he improved himself by travels into foreign nations, and obtained the reputation of a scholar, a statesman and a soldier. He was made *Knight of the Bath* at the coronation of king James I. in England, who afterwards sent him as ambassador to Lewis XIII. on behalf of the French Protestants: and upon his return he was created *Baron of Castle-Island*, in Ireland; and by king Charles I. anno. 1630, he was created a Baron of England, by the title of *Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, and died in 1648.*

This learned person having once unhappily apostatised from the religion wherein he was bred, into *Deism*, though, as other Deists likewise do, he did still seem to own the Church of England; yet he set himself for the maintenance of Deism in his writings. And

* See Geograph. Diction. articles *Herbert* and *Deism*. See also the Life of Mr. George Herbert.

to this purpose he published some time after the year 1640, (for I have not the first edition of it) his book *de Veritate*, and shortly after another, *de Causis Errorum*. These two books are for the most part philosophical, and written with some singularity of notion. What is truth in them is rather delivered in a *new way* than *new*; and by the use of vulgar words in new and uncommon acceptations, and his obscure way of management of his notions, is scarcely intelligible to any but metaphysical readers, nor to such, without greater application, than perhaps the matter is worth. I should not think myself concerned in either of these two books, their subject being philosophical, were it not that it is his avowed design in them, to lay a foundation for his peculiar notions in religion.

There are two things at which Herbert, in these and his other writings, plainly aims at—to *overthrow revelation* and to *establish natural religion* in its room. It is not my design or province at present, to defend revelation against the efforts of this or any other author, though I think it were a business of no great difficulty to remove what Herbert has said against it; yet since I have mentioned his attempt upon it, I cannot pass it without some short, but just remarks upon his unfair, if not disingenuous way of treating revelation.

1. On many occasions, with what candor and ingenuity himself knew, he professeth a great respect to revelation, and particularly to the scripture's, and pretends he designs nothing in prejudice of the *established religion*: but any one that peruses the books will soon see, that this is only like *Joab's kiss*, a blind to make his reader secure, and fear no danger from the *sword* that he has under his garment: For notwithstanding of this, he every where insinuates prejudices against all revelation, as *uncertain*, *unnecessary*, and of *little* or *no use* to any, save those to whom it was originally, or rather immediately given.

2. Upon all occasions, and sometimes without any occasion given him from his subject, he makes sallies upon truths of the greatest importance in the Christian religion; such as the doctrines of the *corruption of our nature*, *satisfaction of Christ*, and the *decrees of God*, &c. And having represented them disingenuously, or else ignorantly, (which I less suspect in a man of his learning) not in that way they are proposed in scripture, or taught by those who maintain them, but under the disguise of gross misrepresentations, mistaken notions, and strained consequences: and having thus put them in beast's skins, as the primitive persecutors did the Christians, he sets his dogs upon them to worry them; and this without any regard had unto the foundation they have in the scriptures, or the evidence of the proofs that may be advanced for the scriptures in general, or these doctrines in particular, and without all consideration of the inconsistency of this way of treating truths plainly

taught, and inculcated as of the greatest importance in the scriptures, with that respect, which upon other occasions he pretends to that divine book.

3. He states wrong notions of the grounds whereupon revelation is received, and overthrows those imaginary ones he has set up, as the reasons of our belief of the scriptures, and then triumphs in success. How easy is it to set up a *man of straw* and beat him down with the finger!

4. The Deists generally, and Herbert in particular, do grant, that the Christian revelation has manifestly the advantage of all other pretenders to revelation, as in respect of the intrinsic excellency of the matter, so likewise in respect of the reasons that may be pleaded for its truth.* And so certain and evident is this, that one of their number owns, that Christianity has "the "fairest pretensions of any religion in the world," and exhorts to "make a diligent enquiry into it; arguing, "that if the pre-"tences of Christianity be well grounded, it cannot be a frivolous "and indifferent matter;" and he grants further, that "the truth "of the matters of fact which confirm it, is hardly possible to be "denied."† Now notwithstanding of this manifest and acknowledged difference betwixt the scriptures and other pretenders to revelation, when Herbert speaks of revelation, he jumbles all pretenders together without distinction, and urges the faults of the most ridiculous and obviously spurious pretenders, against revelation, in general, as if every particular one, and especially Christianity, were chargeable with these faults: Is this candid and fair dealing, to insinuate into the unwary reader that these palpable evidences of imposture are to be found in all revelations alike, while, even they themselves being judges, the scriptures are not concerned in them? Yet this is the way that Christianity is treated by this learned author; and his steps have been closely traced in this piece of scandalous disingenuity, (for I can give it no milder name,) by Blount and the other writers of the party, as I could make appear by many instances, if need required.

5. Our author makes high pretences to accuracy in searching after truth, and treats all other authors with the greatest scorn and contempt imaginable, as short in that point: yet he seldom states a question fairly, but huddles all up in the dark, especially, when he speaks about revelation, and heaps together difficulties about all the concernments of revealed religion, without any regard to the distinct heads to which they belong. This is a ready way to shake the faith of his reader about all truths, but establish him in none.

Other reflections I forbear, though he has given fair occasion for many: but this is not my subject. This part of his discourse has

* Religio Laici page 9,10. † Letter to the Deists, page 139.

been animadverted on by a learned author, though the book is not come to my hand.*

The other branch of our author's design, *viz.* His attempt to establish the *sufficiency of natural religion,* is that wherein I am directly concerned. This he only proposes in his book *de Veritate* at the close, with a short explication of his famed *five Articles,* of which more anon. And in a small treatise entitled *Religio Laici,* subjoined to his book *de Causis Errorum,* he further explains them. The design of this last mentioned treatise is to shew, that the vulgar can never come to certainty about the truth of any *particular revelation,* or the preferableness of its pretences unto others, and that therefore of necessity they must sit down satisfied with the religion he offers them, consisting of five articles, agreed to, if we believe him, by all religions.

The religion, consisting of five articles, which we shall exhibit immediately, he attempts to prove *sufficient* by some arguments in that last mentioned treatise. But the principal proof, on which our author lays the whole stress of his cause, is at large exhibited in another treatise of our author, *de Religione Gentilium,* published at Amsterdam, anno 1663, by *J. Vossius,* son to the great *Ger. Joan. Vossius.* His pleadings in these and his other writings we shall call to an account by and bye.

Herbert, in his treatise *de Religione Gentilium,* pretends, Whatever mistakes the Gentile world was under in matters of religion; yet there was as much agreed to by all nations, as was necessary to their eternal happiness. Particularly, he tells us, that they were agreed about *five Articles,* of *natural religion,* which he thinks are *sufficient,* viz. 1. *That there is one supreme God.* 2. *That he is to be worshipped.* 3. *That virtue is the principal part of his worship.* 4. *That we must repent of our sins.* 5. *That there are rewards and punishments both in this life and that which is to come.*‡

Charles Blount, who set himself at the head of the Deists some few years ago, in a small treatise entitled *Religio Laici,* printed 1683, which in effect is only a translation of Herbert's book of the same name, inverting a little the order, but without the addition of any one thought of moment; in this treatise, I say, he reckons up the articles of natural religion much after the same manner. 1. *That there is one only supreme God.* 2. *That he chiefly is to be worshipped.* 3. *That virtue, goodness and piety, accompanied with faith in, and love to God, are the best ways of worshipping him.* 4. *That we should repent of our sins from the bottom of our hearts, and turn to the right way.* 5. *That there is a reward and punishment after this life.*†

* Baxter's More Reasons for the Christian Religion, and no Reason against it, in the Appendix.

† De Relig. Gentil. page 186, 210, &c. ‡ Ibid. 49, 50.

Another, in a letter directed to Mr. Blount, subscribed A. W. has given us an account of them somewhat different from both the former, in seven articles. 1. *That there is one infinite, and eternal God, creator of all things.* 2. *That he governs the world by providence.* 3. *That it is our duty to worship and obey him as our Creator and Governor.* 4. *That our worship consists in prayer to him, and praise of him.* 5. *That our obedience consists in the rules of right reason, the practice whereof is moral virtue.* 6. *That we are to expect rewards and punishments hereafter according to our actions in this life ;* which includes the soul's immortality, and is proved by our admitting *providence.* 7. *That, when we err from the rules of our duty, we ought to repent and trust in God's mercy for pardon.*‡. To the same purpose, without any alteration of moment from what we have above quoted, Herbert reckons up and repeats the same articles in his other treatises.

These other authors do but copy after Herbert. To him the honor of this invention belongs, and he values himself not a little upon it. Let us hear himself. "*Atque ita (sed non sine multi-*" *plici accurataque religionum tum dissectione, tum inspectione)* " *quinque illos articulos sæpius jam adductos deprehendi. Qui-*" *bus etiam inventis me feliciorem Archimede quovis existima-*" *vi.*"* He acquaints us, that he consulted divines and writers of all parties, but in vain, for to find the universal religion he sought after; it is not therefore likely, if any had moulded this universal religion, or put it into a form meet for the Deist's purpose before him, that it could have escaped his observation and diligence.

Now we have had a sufficient view of the articles, to which the Deists reduce their religion. Let us next inquire after the proof of this religion; the burden whereof must lean upon Herbert. The Deists since his time have added nothing that has a shew of proof that I can yet see. Well, after he has in his other treatises, as has been said, proposed and explained his religion he at length comes to the proof of it in his treatise *de Religione Gentilium.* Here the main strength of his cause lies, and with this we shall mainly deal; yet so as not to overlook any thing that has a shew of proof elsewhere in his writings.

In this treatise *de Religione Gentilium,* he makes it his work to illustrate and prove, "That the abovementioned five articles were universally believed by people of all religions." This is the proposition at which that whole book aims. In the managemeat of

‡ Oracles of Reason, page 197.

* De Relig. Gent. page 218.—"And thus, though not without a manifold " and accurate dissection and inspection of religion, I have found those five " articles, that have already been often quoted, on finding which I thought " myself more happy than any Archimedes."

this subject our author gives great proof of diligence, vast reading, and much philological learning. He gives large accounts of the idolatry of the Heathens and their pleas for it, or rather of the pleas, which our author thought might be made for it; which has given occasion to several conjectures, as to our author's design in that book, and his other writings.

I find a learned author who has bestowed a few short animadversions on this book, inclined to think it not unlikely, that Herbert's principal design was, if not to justify, yet to excuse the idolatry of the church of Rome.* And if one considers how many pleas Herbert makes for the Gentiles' idolatry, and that they are generally such as may serve for the Romanists' purpose; and if it is further considered, that Herbert elsewhere seems, upon many occasions, to found the whole certainty of revelation upon the authority of the church, and that alone, and the vast power he gives to the church as to the appointment of *rites*, yea, and all the *ordinances* of *worship*; if it is further considered how concerned some persons were for an accommodation with the church of Rome at that time, when our author wrote, and how far Herbert was concerned in that party, who were striving for this reconciliation; if I say, all these things are laid together, this conjecture will not appear destitute of probability. I might add to this, that Herbert makes use of pleas not much unlike those which are used by the church of Rome to shake Protestants out of their faith, that they may at length fall in with the *infallible guide*. In fine, I dare be bold to undertake the maintenance of this against any opposer, that Herbert's method followed out, will inevitably make the vulgar Atheists; whether he designed by this to make them Papists, I know not, nor shall I judge. How far this conjecture will hold, I leave to others to judge. I shall only add this one thing more, that the seeming opposition of Herbert's design unto Popish principles, and his thrusts at the Romish clergy, will not be sufficient to clear him of all suspicion in this matter, with those who have seriously perused the books written by Papists in disguise, on design to shake the faith of the vulgar sort of Protestants, in some of which, there is as great appearance at first view of a designed overthrow of Popery, and as hard things said against the Romish clergy. Good watermen can look one way and row another. What there was of this, will one day be manifest.

The Deists maintain, that "their religion, consisting of the abovenamed five articles is sufficient." It is the avowed design of Herbert in his book, to assert this and prove it; and yet he spends it wholly in proving this proposition, "That these five articles did universally obtain." Now it seems of importance to inquire,

* Abrah. Heidanus de Origine Erroris, Lib. VI. Cap. XI. page 370.

why Herbert should be at so much pains to prove this. How does universal reception of these articles establish his religion, and of what consequence is it to the Deists' cause?

For clearing this, it must be observed, that it is a common religion that Herbert is inquiring after, which may be equally useful to all mankind; and nothing can agree to this, which is not commonly received. And Herbert has before laid down this for a principle, that the only way to distinguish common notices from these which are not so, is *universal reception.* This according to him is the only sure criterion. "*Religio est notitia communis*— "*Videndum igitur est, quænam in religione ex consensu univer-* "*sali sunt agnita: Universa conferantur, quæ autem ab omni-* "*bus tanquam vera in religione agnoscuntur, communes, notitiæ* "*habendæ sunt. Sed dices esse laboris improbi: at alia ad veri-* "*tates notitiarum communium non superest via; quas tamen ita* "*magni facimus, ut in illis solis sapientiæ divinæ universalis ar-* "*cana deprehendi possint.*"*

But to set this matter in a full light, I shall make it appear, That a failure in this attempt, to prove that these were universally agreed to, is inevitably ruinous to the Deists' cause and plea for a common religion; though the proof of this point will be very far from inferring that there is a common religion, as shall be cleared afterwards. And this will give further light into the reasons of Herbert's undertaking.

To this purpose then it is to be observed, That the Deists being agreed about the rejection of the Christian religion, and that revelation whereon it is founded, they are for ever barred from the acceptance of any other revelation as the measure of religion, that the world knows: For they own no revelation ever had so fair a plea, and such probable grounds to support its pretensions, as the Christian revelation has. However therefore, the generality of the Deists were satisfied to lay aside the Christian religion, which will not allow them that liberty in following the courses that they are resolved upon, without putting any thing into its place; yet the more sober sort saw, that to reject this religion and put none in its place, would, by the world, be counted plain Atheism, which deservedly is odious in the world. Therefore they saw there was a necessity of substituting one in its place.

* De Veritate, pag. 55.——"Religion is a common notice, we ought to "see therefore what things in religion are acknowledged by universal con- "sent. Let all be gathered together, and those things in religion which "are acknowledged by all to be true are to be reckoned common notices. "But you will say that this is a task of immense labor. But no other way "remains for arriving at those truths that may be reckoned common notices. "Which, however, we value so highly, that in these alone the secrets of "divine universal wisdom can be found."

Now since revelation was rejected, nothing remained, but to pretend, that reason was able to supply the defect and afford a sufficient religion, a religion that is able to answer all the purposes for which others pretend revealed religion necessary.

When once they were come this length, it was easy to see that it might be inquired, Whether this rational religion lay within the reach of every man's reason, or was only to be found out by persons of learning?

If it is pretended, that only persons of learning, application and uncommon abilities, could attain the discovery of this religion, the difficulties whereon the pretenders are cast, are obvious.

What shall then become of their argument against revealed religion, "that it is not universal, that it is not received by all mankind, that therefore it is not attended with sufficient evidence."—Upon this supposition there is a fair ground for retorting the argument, with no less, if not more force, against natural religion.

Again, what shall become of that plea, which they make for natural religion, "that God must provide all his creatures in the means necessary for attaining that happiness they are capable of?" May they not, on this supposition, be urged, that, according to it, the generality are not provided with such means?

Nor will it avail to pretend, that those who are capable of this discovery, are obliged to teach others the *laws of nature.* For, it may be inquired, Must the people take all on trust from them, or see with their own eyes? If they must take all on trust, then is there not here a fair occasion for charging priest-craft upon them, who blame it so much in others? Will not this oblige our wits, men of reason and learning, to turn *creed* and *system-makers?* Further, what will they say of their own neglect, and the neglect of the learned world in this matter? How will they reconcile this to the notion of God's goodness, of which they talk so much, to suspend the happiness of the greater part of mankind on their care and diligence, who quite neglect them, but keep up their knowledge, and thereby expose the poor vulgar to inevitable ruin? Moreover, if they set up for teachers, they must shew their credentials. Finally, there is no place, upon this supposition, left for the strongest pleas for a sufficient religion, that is common to mankind, which are taken from the nature of God and man, and their mutual relation; because all these arguments conclude equally for all mankind, and so are not adapted to assert some peculiar prerogative in one above another. Nor are any able to justify a claim to any further ability this way, than he can satisfy the world of, by the effects of it. When a man pretends to no other abilities, than such as are due to human nature, that *he is a man* is sufficient to justify his claim; but if he pretends to some eminency in natural or acquired endowments above others, he must give such proofs of it, as the

nature of the thing requires; that is, he must make it appear, that he has that ability, by acting proportionable to the nature and degree of the power that he claims; and further than this is done, no wise man will believe him. It will not help them out here, to say, that they only of better capacities, and who have more leisure, are able to discover this natural religion; but the vulgar are capable of judging and seeing with their own eyes when it is proposed: For, besides that all the former difficulties, or most of them recur here, still it may be inquired, Is this made appear? The difficulties on this side are unsurmountable.

Wherefore of necessity, they must maintain, "that every man is able to find out and discover what is sufficient for himself in matters of religion." But now when this is asserted, if the experience of the world lie against them, and it be found, as is commonly supposed, that many nations, nay, the far greater part of mankind, had no such religion, this will much prejudge their opinion, about every man's having this ability of finding out a religion, or as much in religion as was necessary to his own happiness.

How will they persuade the world of such an ability, if experience is not made appear to favor them? It is commonly thought, and we have made it appear, that the wisest men, when they essayed what power they had of this sort, foully blundered, and fell short of satisfying either themselves or others; and that the world generally acknowledged the want of any experience of this ability, and therefore looked after revelations with that greediness, that laid them open to be imposed on, by every vain pretender to supernatural revelation.

Now if things are allowed to be thus, how shall they prove man possessed of this power, if they are cut off from the advantage of the usual fountain of conviction, in matters of this nature? What is the way we come to know, that all men have a power of understanding, or that such a power is due to his nature? Is it not hence, that wherever we meet with men, we find them exerting the acts of understanding? And the like may be said of his other powers. Now if it is once admitted, that there are single persons, nay, whole nations, yea more, many nations that have no experience of this pretended ability, in reference to matters of religion, how will they ever be able to persuade the world that all men have it? More especially, if it be admitted, that the learned themselves were here defective, as to that which persons of the meanest abilities and least leisure are supposed able for: this will look very ill, if a man who toils all his days at the plough and harrow, could make this discovery, how could a man of learning and application find it hard.

In a word, if things are thus stated, as is generally supposed, and has been already proven, and shall be further cleared anon,

then there is little left them to pretend for this natural and universal ability of mankind in matters of religion, if not perhaps, to tell us a story of God's being obliged, in point of *goodness*, to endow all mankind with a capacity, whereof there is no evidence in experience; yea, which the experience of the world plainly declares them to want. But this will not easily take with men of sobriety and sense: For it is not more evident, that *there is a God*, than, that *this God must do whatever is proper and suitable for him to do:* And on the contrary, that *it was not necessary or proper for him to do any thing that really he has not done.* If then, any shall pretend it becoming or necessary for God to do any thing, which experience shews he has not done, he will be so far from obtaining credit with the world, that on the contrary he will justly fall under the suspicion of Atheism, and an evil design against God. For to say, that God in point of goodness, was obliged to do this, which experience shews he has not done is plainly to say, God acted not as became him. There was therefore a plain necessity of undertaking to prove experience on their side, if Deism was to be supported.

If the common apprehensions of men, who enjoy the light of Christianity, with respect to the state of the Heathen world, are well grounded, all the pretences of Deists as to the sufficiency of natural religion are forever ruined, and quite subverted.

It was but necessary therefore, that the learned Herbert, who undertook to maintain the cause, should attempt to shew, that experience was on their side, and that in fact a religion in itself sufficient did universally obtain. And he had the more reason to be concerned in this matter, because he avows it as his opinion, that without a supposition of such an universal religion as the Deists do plead for, Providence cannot be maintained. "*Et quidem*, says "he, *quum media, ad victum vestitumque hic accommodata suppe-* "*ditarit cunctis natura sive providentia rerum communis, suspi-* "*cari non potui, eundem Deum, sive ex natura, sive ex gratia in* "*suppeditandis ad beatiorem hoc nostro statum mediis ulli homi-* "*num deesse posse, vel velle, adeo ut licet mediis illis parum recte* "*vel feliciter usi sint Gentiles, haud ita tamen per Deum opti-* "*mum maximum steterit, quo minus salvi fierent.*"* And as it is clear that this author thinks, that Providence is not to be maintained without an universal religion; so it is sufficiently evident,

* De Relig. Gentil. Cap. 1. pag. 4.——"And indeed as the common na- "ture or providence of things here, has furnished all men with full means of "food and cloathing, I could not suspect that the same God, either from "his nature or from grace, could or would be wanting to any of mankind in "supplying him with the means of attaining a more happy state than the "present, so that although the Heathens used those means unskilfully or un- "happily, yet the best and greatest God was not to be blamed for their not "being saved."

that this universal religion is not to be maintained, if experience lies against it.

Here then was a plain necessity for undertaking this argument, and proving, or at least pretending to prove, that all mankind had a sufficient religion, or were able to know all that was necessary.—For we see the whole frame of Deism falls to the ground, if this is overthrown. This therefore was an undertaking worthy of our noble author's great parts, long experience, great charity to mankind, and the great concern he professes to find in himself for the vindication of Providence.

And sure if such a man, after so much pains, has failed in the proof of this point, any that may succeed him, may justly despair of success. He read all the Heathen authors to find this universal religion, and he was as willing and desirous to find it as any man. And he has given in this learned book evidence enough of his reading.

But since no religion was to be admitted, save that whereon all men were agreed, it was wisely done by our author, that he reduced this universal creed to a *few articles*. For one who knew so much of the state of the world, could not but see, that they were not very many wherein they were agreed.

Well, he undertakes and goes through with the work, and concludes with that memorable triumph above mentioned; "*Atque* "*ita (sed non sine multiplici, accurataque religionum tum dissec-* "*tione, tum inspectione) quinque illos articulos, sæpius jam ad-* "*ductos deprehendi. Quibus etiam inventis me feliciorem quovis* "*Archimede existimavi.*"

But one might possibly ask, How it could cost our author so much labor and pains to find out this religion, and to sever the articles belonging to it from others, with which they were intermixed, when every illiterate man must be supposed able to do this?

However, if our author is not belied by common fame, he repented, that he had spent his time so ill in contributing so far to the advancement of irreligion; though others contradict this and tell us, that dying he left this advice to his children,—"They "talk of trusting in Christ for salvation; but I would have you be "virtuous, and trust to your virtue, to make you happy."

Whatever there is as to this, I shall now proceed to examine our author's arguments.

CHAP. XIV.

Wherein it is inquired, Whether Herbert has proved that his five Articles did universally obtain?

WE have heard our author's five articles above; he pretends to make it appear, that they were every where received; we shall now inquire, Whether the arguments adduced by him do evince this? and then in the next place, we shall see whether it is indeed true. And for method's sake, we shall speak of every article apart, and dissect and inspect his book, to find all that he offers, which has the least appearance of proof.

ARTICLE 1.

There is One Supreme God.

THAT which our author pretends to prove as to this article, is, that it was generally owned by all nations, that there is *one Supreme Being*, and that this Supreme Being, whom they owned, was the same whom we adore. We are not now to dispute, whether this article may be known by the light of nature; nor whether some particular persons went not a great way in the acknowledgment of it. This we have before granted: But the question is, Whether all nations agreed in this, *that there is one Supreme God*, and he the very same whom we adore? Let us hear our author, "*Quamvis enim de aliquibus alijs Dei, sive attributis, sive* "*muneribus disceptatio inter veteres esset, uti suo loco monstra-*"*bimus; summum tamen aliquem extare, aud semper extitisse* "*Deum, neque apud sapientes, neque apud insipientes dubium* "*(puto) fuit.*"* And afterwards, when he thinks the first part of his article sufficiently cleared, he proceeds to the second part of it, "*Reliquum est, ut Deum summum Gentilium, eundum ac nostrum esse probemus.*"† Thus we see what our author pretends. Whether he has proved this, we are now to inquire. He has not digested his arguments, nor cast them into any such mould, as might make it obvious wherein the force of them lies, and therefore we must be at pains to scrape together, whatever is any where

* De Relig. Gent. pag. 158.—"For although there may have been dis-"putes among the ancients about certain other attributes or offices of God, "as we shall shew in its own place, yet it was never doubted, I think ei-"ther among the wise or the unwise, that some supreme God existed, and "had always existed."

† Ibid, 166.——"It remains to prove that the Supreme God of the Hea-"thens was the same as ours."

through his book dropped, that may contribute in the least toward the strengthening of his cause; and we shall not omit any thing willingly, that has the least appearance of force.

The first observation our author insists on to this purpose is, "That the Gentiles did not intend the same by the name of *God*, that we now do. We by that name design the Supreme, Eternal, Independent Being; whereas they intend no more than any virtue or power superior to man, on which man did any way depend." *Id omne Deum vocitarunt quod vim aliquam eximiam in inferiora, sed in homines præcipue ederet.*‡ This he frequently inculcates, and tells us in the first page of his book, that the observation of this, was that which inclined him to think, or presume the Gentiles not chargeable with that gross Polytheism, with which most do, and he himself had, upon a slight view of their religion, well nigh once concluded them chargeable.

If the Gentiles meant the same by the word God, which we do, no doubt they stand chargeable with the most gross, unaccountable, absurd and ridiculous Polytheism imaginable: For scarcely is there any thing animate or inanimate, but by some way or other became deified. *Quicquid humus, pelagus, cœlum, mirabile gignunt, id dixere deos, colles, freta, flumina, flammas.**

But our author is not willing to admit that they were so absurd; and to induce us to favorable sentiments, he has blessed us with this observation, That when they called those creatures *animate* and *inanimate Gods*, they meant no such thing as we do by that name. Well, if we should grant that the wiser sort, at least, or perhaps even the vulgar too, did sometimes so understand the word, as he alleges, will that serve his purpose, and satisfy him? Nay, by no means, unless we grant him, that they always so understood the word, save when they spoke of the *One true God*. But this is too much to be granted, unless he prove it; especially if we are able to evince, that not a few, both wise and unwise, believed that there were more than One Eternal, Independent Being: and possibly this may be made appear afterward. A learned author, in reproach of the Grecian and Roman learning, says, "That set-"ting aside what they learned out of Egypt, they could never by "themselves determine whether there were *many* Gods or but *one*."†

The next thing our author insists on to this purpose, is, "That different names do not always point out different gods, but different virtues of the same God." "*Tot Dei appellationes, quot*

‡ De Relig. Gent. pag. 13.—"They called all that God, which produced any "considerable effect on inferior things, but especially upon men."

* Aurel. contr. Sym. Lib. I.—"Whatever wonderful thing the earth, the "sea, or sky produced, that they called gods—hills, seas, rivers, fire."

† Wolsely's Scripture Belief, page 110.

" *munera, adeoq ; si triginta milia Deum nominal quod ab Œno-*
" *mao & Hesiodo in Θεογονια perhibetur supponat quispiam, &*
" *tot ejus munera dari, fatendum est,*" says Seneca, quoted by our author.‡ And consequentially to this, the same Seneca tells us, " Sapientes nequaquam Jovem eum intellexisse, qui in Capi-
" tolio aut alijs templis fulmine armatus cerneretur, sed potius
" Mentem Animunque existimasse omnium custodem, universiq ;
" administratorem, qui hanc rerum universalitatem condiderit, ac
" eandem nutu suo gubernet, ac propterea divina quæq ; nomina
" ei convenire. Itaq ; optimo jure fatum appellari posse, ut a
" quo ordo seriesve causarum inter se aptarum dependeat. Ita is
" Providentiam dicit, quum ipse provideat ut omnia perpetuo ac
" perenni quodam cursu, ad finem ad quem distinata sunt, currunt.
" Naturam quoque nuncupari, ex eo enim cuncta nascuntur, per
" eum quicquid vitæ est particeps, vivet: Mundi quin etiam no-
" men illi congruere. Quicquid sub aspectum cadit, ipse est, qui
" seipso nititur, & omnia ambitu suo complectitur, universaque
" numine suo complet."* To the same purpose speaks Servius of all the Stoicks, quoted likewise by our author.† The plain English of all is, he would persuade us that by these testimonies he has proved, that the Gentiles, when they attributed the name GOD to so many things, intended no more, but to set out so many *different virtues*, which all resided in the *same* GOD.

As to this, we may grant, that our author has indeed proved, That different names do not always point out different gods ; for he has told us that each of their gods had many different names. But this will do him no service, if we grant not, that different names *never* point out different gods. But how shall we do this, when our author has shewed us, that many nations worshipped the sun, moon, and stars ; and thought them gods, yea, distinct ones too, different in their *natures* as well as *names*. Each of

‡ Seneca Lib. 5. Cap. 17. Herbert de Relig. Gent. pag. 13.—" We must
" confess that there are as many names of God, as there are offices, so that if
" any one suppose that there are thirty thousand different names of god's, as
" is related by Oenomaus and Hesiod in his Theogony, we must acknowledge
" that there are likewise as many offices of the Deity."

* Herb. De Rel. Gent. pag. 47.——" Wise men did not mean by Jupi-
" ter, that statue that is seen in the Capitol and other temples, armed with
" thunderbolts ; but rather thought that that Mind and Soul was Jupiter,
" which was the Guardian and Governor of the Universe, who formed this
" whole world, and governs it by his nod, and that all divine names agree
" to him. He may therefore be very justly called Fate, as on him the order
" and series of connected causes depends. Thus too he may be called Provi-
" dence, as he provides that all things should tend to the end for which they
" were destined, in a constant and perpetual course. He may likewise be
" called Nature, for all things arise from him, and he gives life to all that
" lives. Nay, even the name of World may agree to him, for whatever is
" visible is himself, who depends on himself, surrounds all things with his
" circumference, and fills all things with his divine presence."

† De Relig. Gentil. pag. 37.

them indeed had different names, nay each of them had many names, titles or eulogies heaped on them by their fond worshippers, who no doubt fancied, that their gods were smitten with that same vanity, wherewith they themselves were tainted; which yet as learned Rivet observes, had a dangerous effect upon the vulgar in process of time: for they were not so quick in their observations as our author. "*Coacervatis enim elogiis, titulisque congestis, capi numen putabant, maximoque inde affici honore; ita ut tandem quæ diversa tantum nomina superstitionis fuerant, grassante errore, diversa numina haberentur.*"*

Further, we know full well that some of the more wise and learned men, especially after the light of the gospel began to shine through the world, began to be ashamed of their religion, and especially the number of their gods, and to use the same shifts to palliate the foolish and wild Polytheism, which the gospel so fully exposed: and particularly Seneca, who was contemporary with Paul, (and by some, upon what ground I now enquire not, is said to have conversed with him) and others of the Stoicks steered this course, to vindicate their religion againstt he assaults of the Christians. But it is as true, this was a foolish attempt, and its success I cannot better express, than in the words of the learned and excellent Dr. Owen: "Postquam autem severius paulo inter nonnullos philosophari cœptum est, atque limatiores de natura divina opiniones inter plurimos obtinuerant, sapientes pudere cœperunt eorum deorum, quos protulerant ferrea secula, ignorantia and tenebris tota devoluta. Omnia ideo, quæ de diis fictitis, Jove scil: totoque sacro Helenismi choragio, vulgo celebrata erant, res naturales adumbrasse apud antiquos Μυθολογους contenderunt. Theologium hanc Μυθικην vocant, quam nihil aliud fuisse aiunt, quam naturæ doctrinam."† And in some passages after, he shews the vanity of this attempt. "Postquam enim evangelii lumen usque adeo radiis suis terrarum orbem perculisset, rubescenda veteris superstitionis insania apud ipsum vulgus in contemptum venerit, acutiores sophistæ, quod dixi, quo stultitiam istam co-

* Ad. Hos. 2. 8. Referente Owen Theolog. pag. 189.—"For they thought that the Deity was charmed with encomiums and titles heaped one above another, and received great honor from thence, so that at length those different names, devised by superstition, by the progress of error, came to be reckoned different deities.

† Ubi supra pag. 196.—"But after philosophy began to be more seriously cultivated, and more correct opinions concerning the divine nature had taken place among the generality, the wise men began to be ashamed of those gods, which had been invented in the iron ages, that were entirely involved in ignorance and darkness, and therefore they maintained that all things that had been commonly reported of the fictitious gods, viz. Jupiter and all the hierarchy of Greece, signified only certain natural things in the sense of the ancient Mythologists. And they called this Mythological Divinity, which they said was nothing else than the knowledge of nature, veiled by allegory."

" lore novo fucatam, amabilem redderent, figmento huic (N. B.) " cui adversatur omnis historiæ fides, pertinacissime adhæserunt. " Imo, ut obiter dicam innovata est primis ecclesiæ temporibus " apud ipsos Gentiles, tota philosophandi ratio."* Any one that would desire to see the folly of this observation exposed, on which our author lays so much stress, may peruse that chapter, whence these words are quoted.† Nor is this more than what Velleius speaks of Zeno a Stoick and others, " Cum Hesiodi Θεογονιαν " interpretatur, tollit omnino, (N. B.) usitatas perceptasque, cog- " nitiones deorum."‡ &c.

But were this true, which those quotations pretend, it will not yet come up to our author's purpose; for these quotations tell us not that all the world were of this mind, but only the wise men; and I fear that this too needs a restriction. Now this comes not near to the point. When our author has occasion to notice some absurd practices or opinions that are against him, he rejects them with this: " *Quod a paucis solummodo superstitiose factum, non* " *satis in religionem asseritur. Nos autem haud alia quam* " *quæ omnes, vel plerique saltem coluere, sub religionis titulo po-* " *nimus.*|| Now let this be, as it is, the state of the question, and what some of the wiser did, is nothing at all to the purpose; and this indeed is the point. In fine, we doubt not before we have done, from our author's own book, to demonstrate, that what he aims at in this observation, and consequently all the story of the *mystick theology* of the Heathens, is utterly inconsistent with all faith of history, which makes us as sure of this, as they can of any thing, that many nations, nay most nations, nay most wise men held a plurality of gods, even in the sense that our author would deny. The next observation hem akes, is a-kin to the former. He, following Vossius, as he tells us, divides all the Gentiles' worship into *proper*, *symbolical* and *mixt*.§ Proper is, when the true God, or the sun, or the moon is worshipped as the true God, and the wor-

* Ubi supra pag. 198.—" For after the light of the gospel had so far en- " lightened the world with its rays, that the shameful madness of the an- " cient superstition had fallen into contempt, even among the vulgar, the " more acute sophists, as I said before in order to render that foolery amia- " ble, by giving it a new colour, adhered most obstinately to this fiction, " though opposite to all the faith of history, nay, we may observe in passing, " that in the first ages of the church, the manner of philosophising among " the Heathens underwent a total change."

† Owen ubi supra. Lib. 3. Cap. 6.

‡ Cicero de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1.—" When he interprets the Theogony of He- " siod he entirely overturns altogether the usual and received traditions con- " cerning the gods."

|| De Relig. Gentil. pag. 12.—" What was done superstitiously by a few " only, cannot be said to be a part of the general religion, but we place un- " der the title of religion no other things than those which all, or at least " the most part practised."

§ Ibid, pag. 183.

ship is designed ultimately to terminate in their honor: Symbolic is, when the true God is worshipped in the sun, as an image, representation or symbol of him; then the worship is not designed only, nor mainly to terminate on the sun, but on the true God. As for the mixt, we are not concerned to speak of it. He would every where have us to believe, that all their worship was symbolical, and as such he frequently seems to justify and avouch it as reasonable, which the Papists will readily thank him for; and he expressly asserts this, that all "their worship, save what was directly addressed to the true God," which I believe was very little, "was symbolic." *Atque cultum proprium nullum fuisse olim præterquam summi Dei, videtur.** It is well that he expresses this position modestly, as being conscious how great ground others will see to judge otherwise. And the reason that follows, drawn from the alledged evidences of the thing, we shall have under consideration anon. But toward the close of this book, he calls them *ignorantes*, or *scioli*, that believe not as he believes in this matter.

But it should be expected, that when he advances such a bold position, and is so hard on them that dissent from him, he would give good proof of it; but if any expect that, he will find himself deceived. I find indeed a passage quoted with a high commendation to this purpose. "*Atque hic de cultu dei symbolico præclarum locum ex Maximo Tyrio, Dissert. 38. quem adducit Vossius, supprimere non possum. Barbari omnes pariter Deum esse intelligunt; constituere interim sibi alia atque alia signa: Ignem Persæ imaginem quæ unum duret diem, vorax, quid & insatiabile, sic Maximi verba vertit Vossius.*"† But what is all this to the purpose? Doth this quotation from a Platonic philosopher, who lived an hundred and fifty years after Christ, when the gospel had overspread the whole world, and chased the Pagan darkness away, and made them ashamed of their old opinions, and improven reason, prove any thing? To spend time on this, after what has been said above, were to trifle with a witness. The Deists have not, nor can they ever prove the truth of this bold assertion; the falsehood of which we may detect before we have done. But hitherto our author has only used his *shield*; we must next see whether his *sword* be not of better metal. All that has been hitherto said, is only a defensative for the Heathen's opinions and

* De Relig. Gent. pag. 226.—"And there seems to have been no proper "worship of old, except that of the Supreme God."

† De Rel. Gent. pag. 70.—"And here I cannot suppress a famous place in "Maximus Tyrius, Diss. 38, which is quoted by Vossius. All the barbarians "believe equally that there is a God, but set up different signs or representa- "tions of him. For example, the Persians chuse fire, an image that lasts "but one day, something voracious and insatiable. Thus does Vossius ren- "der the words of Maximus."

practice: We must now see by what arguments he proves that his first article did universally obtain.

His first argument leans upon a few quotations from some Heathens, who assert, that there is one Supreme Being, such as Hierocles, Zoroaster, and others, some of old and some of late.

But all this is nothing to the purpose: For were there twenty times more who said so, this will not prove the point he is obliged to make good. He has undertaken to shew that it was not doubted among wise or unwise, *that there was one supreme God, and he the same whom we adore.* Now what is this to the purpose, to bring the opinions of a few learned men, without telling what were the opinions of the nations or times where they lived, or of the world at large? It is not the question, What Seneca, Zoroaster, Plato, and twenty more, thought, nay what whole nations besides thought? but, What the whole world thought in this matter? This the argument touches not.

His next argument is drawn from the confession of several divines. With this he begins his fifteenth chapter, and frequently speaks of it. But this says no more for him, than other, and perhaps more considerable testimonies, do against him. Besides, since he has not condescended on the persons who fall in with him here, nor their words, we must leave him; as we are not concerned with them, nor obliged to follow them further, than they do the truth.

But that which he lays the most stress on, is the supposed evidence of the thing.* This he frequently insists on, as to all his articles: and its force amounts to this—It is so clear that there is *one only Supreme Being*, and that the sun nor no other is he, that it could not escape the most dull and unthinking.

But here our author puts me in mind of the companions of Christopher Columbus, who first discovered America, about the year 1592; they were one day at table with him, and began to depreciate and undervalue the discovery he had made, telling him how easily others might have done it. Well, says he, I hold you a wager, I do what none of you shall do, and presently calling for an egg, says he, none of you can make that egg stand straight on the table; which when they had essayed to no purpose, he takes it, and crushes the end of it a little, and then it stood easily; which, when they all said it was easy to do: Well, says he, it is very true, ye can do it after I have done it. It is easy to see things after they are discovered to our hand, which we would otherwise never have thought of. All the world was not so discerning as our author was, and his followers pretended to be, and he has given us sufficient proof of that in his book, and I truly wonder

* De Relig. Gent. pag. 182, 166.

with what face any man could make use of this argument after he had read, much more after he had writ such a book, wherein it is made clear as the day, that many nations believed no other God but the sun, moon and stars, as we shall shew afterwards. And I must take the freedom to say, that our noble and learned author, with the rest of the Deists, and all the philosophers, who lived since the gospel obtained in the world, owe more to the *Christian religion*, than they have the ingenuity to own. What they think so clear, when *revelation* has not only taught them the truths, but the grounds of them, was dark not only to the vulgar, but to the wise of old. I cannot better conclude this, than by transcribing a passage of the ingenious Mr. Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding*—"Had you or I, (says he, speaking about *innate ideas*) "been born at the bay of Seldania, possibly our thoughts and no-"tions had not exceeded these brutish ones of the Hottentots that "inhabit there; and had the *Virginian king*, *Apochancana* been "educated in England, he had, perhaps, been as knowing a di-"vine, and as good a mathematician as any in it. The difference "between him and a more improved Englishman, lying barely in "this, that the exercise of his faculties was bounded within the "ways, and modes and notions of his own country, and was never "directed to any other or farther inquiries: And if he had not "any idea of a God as we have, it was only because he pursued "not those thoughts, that would certainly have led him to it."—Thus far Mr. Locke. If some men had been born where the gospel light has not come, they would have learned to talk more soberly of the *sufficiency* of the *light of nature*.

The only thing that remains for him to prove as to this first article is, That this One Supreme God, whom he thinks the Gentiles all centered in, was the *same God* with him whom we worship. For this he refers us to three scriptures—Rom. i. 19. Acts x. throughout, and Acts xvii. 26, &c.

Our author has not drawn any argument from those passages, but barely refers to them. He was particularly unlucky in quoting the last of them: For it obliged him to take notice of an argument arising obviously from the passage, against the purpose he adduced it for the proof of; and indeed that passage affords several arguments against our author's opinion in this matter, which are not easy to be solved, if they who follow him, were to be determined by scripture arguments. But our noble author has scarce fairly laid the objection, which he started to himself from the *altar to the unknown God*. But to speak home to the purpose—There are only two things that can be drawn from these or the like passages. 1. That some of the Gentiles *knew* the *true God*. 2. That all of them had some notions of truth concerning God, or which were only rightly applicable to the *true God*. The actings of conscience

within, and the works of God without them, enforced on them the impression of some power, superior to themselves, on which they depended; and this was indeed a notion of truth concerning God; for this was only justly applicable to the true God: But yet they, through their darkness and wickedness, when they came to inquire more particularly after the true God, applied these notions to creatures, and took them for this true God.

Now this is indeed all, besides bare and repeated assertions, that I can find in our author, to prove that his first article obtained universally: And how far it is from proving this, is evident from what has been said.

ARTICLE II.

This One Supreme God is to be worshipped.

THE second article our author has not attempted a sufficient, nay, nor any separate proof of: Wherefore we go on to the next.

ARTICLE III.

That Virtue and Piety are the principal parts of the worship of this one true God.

THIS he also pretends to have universally obtained, and that the Gentiles expected not Heaven for their worship, or their sacred performances, but for their *moral* worship, that is, their virtues. To prove this, is the design of our author's 15th chapter, at least till page 195.

The first thing he insists on to this purpose is, the high respect which the Heathens put on those things, while they ranked, *mens, ratio, pietas, fides, pudicitia, spes* and *felicitas*,* amongst the number of their gods, and erected temples to them. This he proves at large. But what all this makes to his purpose, I am not yet satisfied.

This indeed proves that they had a respect to all those things. Very true, so they had, and that because of their usefulness in human society. Yea, this proves that they had an undue respect to them, so as to perform acts of worship to them. But that they designed to worship God by those virtues, which they would not allow they had from him, as we shall hear afterwards, is not so easily proven. Besides, this was only at Rome that these altars were erected, and so is far from concluding as to the rest of the world, where virtue, hope, &c. had no such temples.

* Mind, Reason, Piety, Faith, Hope and Happiness.

The next thing our author mentions for proof of the universal reception of this article, is the *custom of the Heathens in deifying their heroes on account of their virtues and piety.* But our author knew too much of the Gentiles' religion to believe that this proves any more, than the fulsome flattery of the blinded world that they had even devils, and, as our author elsewhere well observes, men that were no better than devils; or if there was any more in this custom, when at first invented, it was only some ill applied piece of gratitude to persons, who had been their benefactors, or the benefactors of mankind. And all this respect, that was put on them was not because their virtues reflected any glory on God, but because they had been useful to men. Besides, religion was old in the world before this novel Grecian invention took place.—As the Roman poet and satyrist observed,

> ——————nec turba deorum
> Talis, ut est hodie, contentaque sidera paucis
> Numinibus, miserum urgebant Atlanta minore
> Pondere.*

Nor did this universally obtain. So that the argument concludes just nothing. It neither proves that all the world were agreed that virtue and piety are the principal parts of the worship of God, nor that on account of these, men get eternal happiness. What their immortality was, of which they talked, we may see under the fifth article.

Some few quotations from Cicero, Seneca, Plato, and one or two more compose our author's last argument. Seneca speaking somewhere of Scipio Africanus says, "Animam quidem ejus in cœlum, ex quo erat, redisse persuadeo, non quod magnos exercitus duxit (hos enim Cambyses furiosus, & furore feliciter usus habuit) sed ob egregiam moderationem, pietatemque. Cicero Lib. de Offic. Deos placatos facit pietas & sanctitas." And elsewhere he says, "Nec est ulla erga deos pietas, nisi honesta de numine eorum ac mente opinio: Quum expeti nihil ab iis quod sit injustum, ac inhonestum arbitrere."† Some others he adduces from Plato and others, wherein they say, that happiness and likeness to God are obtained by virtue.

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* "Nor was there such a multitude of gods, as there is now, and the "stars being content with a few deities, pressed the poor Atlas with less "weight."

† De Relig. Gentil. pag. 187—"I am persuaded that his soul returned to that heaven from whence it came, not because he had great armies (for Cambysis who was a madman, and fortunate in his madness, had these too) but on account of his remarkable moderation and piety. . . . . Piety and holiness appease the gods. . . . . Nor is there any piety towards the gods, except an honorable opinion of their deity and mind, when one thinks that nothing unjust and dishonorable should be asked of them."

But to what purpose are all these brought? 1. There are words here of gods, and their worship and piety as respecting them; but not one word of the one true God, of whom alone we speak. 2. It is certain that this piety and sanctity according to those authors, comprehended the worship of their gods, as our author expressly confesses, "*Atque ad pietatem consummatam plurima insuper* (that is, besides virtue of which he speaks before) *postulari aiebant, sed ea præsertim quæ grati in superos animi indicia essent, puta sacrificia, ritus & cerimonias & hujusmodi alia; quorum farrago ingens fuit: Cæterum sine prædictis divis sive deabus, animam regentibus, aditum in cœlum non dari.*"† This last part is only our author's say, and is not reconcileable with what he tells us of their deifying some, who were so far from being gods, that they were, says he, *Ne viri quidem probi.*‡ 3. As for what Cicero says, "That for virtue and piety we are advanced to heaven;" I do not know well how to reconcile it with what he says elsewhere in his book *de Amicitia*, "*Vult plane virtus honorem: nec virtutis est ulla alia merces*," otherwise than by thinking that by heaven, (his *cœlum*,) he meant, that which many of them meant by their *immortality*, that is, an immortal fame, a good reputation after they are gone, amongst the survivors. As for Seneca, Christianity had taught him a little more, and his testimony is not much to be regarded. 4. Were there twenty more of them, they never come near to a proof of the point: it is the sentiments of the world that we are inquiring after, and not what were the thoughts of some of the more improved philosophers. The question is not, Whether men by the light of nature saw an excellency in virtue, and that it was to be followed? but, Whether they looked on it as a part, a principal part of the worship, not of their deities, but of the one true God: and that for which heaven, not that imaginary heaven which men had at their disposal; but an *eternity of happiness in communion with God*, is to be obtained? Now our author advances nothing to prove this point.

ARTICLE IV.

We must repent when we do amiss.

As to this article our author confesses several things, which it will be meet to notice in the entry. 1. He owns that the ancients,

† De Relig. Gentil. pag. 185.—"And they said, that many other things besides were requisite in order to constitute perfect piety, but especially such things as were indications of a mind grateful to the gods, viz. sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies, and other things of this sort, of which there was a great number, but that there was no access to heaven without the aforesaid gods and goddesses, who directed the soul."

‡ Ibid, pag. 195.—"Nor even good men."

the wiser sort of them, thought not repentance a sufficient atonement for the grosser sort of sins ;* and quotes Cicero, saying, *Expiatio scelerum in homines nulla est.*† Where God was offended they sought sanctuary in repentance, and thought it sufficient, but not where men were wronged. "*Cæterum licet in remedium pec-*"*cati, ubi Dei Summi majestas læderetur, pœnitentiam sive dolorem*"*efficacem esse crederent: Non ita tamen ubi homines injuria vel*"*contumelii afficarentur, de pœnitentia illa statuebant Gentiles.*‡ 2. He confesses that they thought not, "Repentance alone a sufficient atonement." He tells us, that they had *Expiationes lustrationesque, sine quibus neque crimine neque pœna solutos semetipsos arbitrabantur.*|| Again, 3. He confesses that the word *repentance* or *penitence*, was rarely used among the ancients, in that sense we use it. "*Neque mihi dubium quin eorum (scil. peccato-*"*rum) pœnituerit Gentiles, quæ tot mala; arcessiverunt; licet rarius*"*quidem pœnitentiæ verbum inter autores, eo quo jam usurpatur*"*sensu reperiatur.*** Since then he makes all these concessions, there remains no more save this, that he pretends all the "world "were agreed upon repentance, as that which was of use to expiate, "at least, some lesser faults committed against God, and that we "should, when we sin, be grieved for it."

To prove this, he quotes some passages from Ovid, Seneca and some others. The only considerable testimony is from Periander, who was one of the seven wise men of Greece: One of whose sentences, he says it was Ἁμάρτων Μὶταμέλου, ὁτὲ ἁμαρτήσας, *Te mali pœniteat, ubi peccaveris.* Seneca says, *Quem pœnitet peccasse pene est innocens.* And Ovid,

> Sæpe levant pœnas, ereptaque lumina reddunt
> Quem bene peccati pœnituisse vides.§

But all these are alleged to no purpose. They do not prove that repentance was looked on as an expiation by the Gentiles. Ovid and Seneca lived too late in the world, and had too great access to learn from others, to be much regarded in this matter; but they only speak their own mind, and we have here no argument of the

* De Rel. Gen. pag. 197.

† Cicero de Leg. Lib. 1—"There is no expiation of crimes against men."

‡ De Rel. Gent. pag. 198.—"But although they thought that penitence or "sorrow was an effectual mean of taking away sin, whereby the majesty of the "Supreme God was injured, yet they had not the same opinion of penitence, "in regard to those sins whereby men were injured and insulted."

|| Ibid. pag. 195.—"Expiations and lustrations, without which they did "not think themselves absolved either from crime or from punishment."

** De Rel. Gent. pag. 198.—"Nor is it a doubt with me that the Gentiles "repented of those crimes which brought so many evils upon them, although "the word repentance, in that sense in which it is now used seldom occurs in "their authors."

§ "You see that he who duly repents of his offence often alleviates his pun-"ishment, and restores his lost light."

agreement of the world as to any thing about repentance. The opinions of the wise are no just measure of the knowledge or apprehensions of the vulgar.

But that whereon our author seems to lay more stress, is their sacrifices, which he pretends are an evidence of their grief for sin, or repentance. *Quorsum enim nisi interno dolore perciti, tot ritus sacraque ad deos placandos excogitassent?*‡

But, 1. If the Gentiles had been as much agreed about repentance as our author pretends, they would indeed have spared all this pains and cost. 2. They were indeed *grieved*, but this grief they did not willingly entertain, nor allow themselves in as their *duty*; but looked upon it as their *torment*, and sought sanctuary in means proper for appeasing their gods, as they thought. 3. This grief, which sacrifices prove them to have had, is no more but that uneasy sense of sin in the conscience, which is a part of its punishment, and no duty performed for their deliverance; and this forced them upon all ways that they could imagine to get rid of it; so that sacrifices were what they betook themselves to, to save themselves, or procure a deliverance from our author's *penitence*. 4. Further, our author, when it is for his purpose, can put another construction on their sacrifices; while we have heard above, he makes them only absurd enough testimonies of gratitude to the gods, and to have no respect to sin at all. It is indeed true, that sometimes they were in this way used; so Pythagoras is said to have used them when he offered Hecatombs to the gods, for a proposition which he found out; but for ordinary, they were designed as expiatory. 5. Do their sacrifices, which they offered to so many gods, prove that they were troubled for offending the *one true God?* I believe not. Aye, but this is what our author should have proved. 6. Does our author tell us that they were so little agreed about this purgative, that no less a person than Plato discarded repentance, and put philosophy in its room, as that whereby only we could be purged? And this leads me to a 7th thing, that shews of how little signification this pretended proof is. That it is known that the more discerning philosophers made most light of those sacrifices, yea of sin, and consequently of our author's Catholic remedy, *repentance*. As to the sufficiency of repentance for the place he assigns it, we have spoken to it above. Our author, I think, has badly proven that it universally obtained. And indeed had there been as much weight laid on it as is pretended, we could not have missed a more large account of it in the writings of the Gentiles. Further, 8. Our author pretends, that repentance is of no avail, as to the *grosser evils*, but only washes away *lesser sins*, and

‡ "For to what purpose; unless they had been prompted by inward sorrow; "would they have contrived so many rites and sacrifices for appeasing the "gods?"

we fear our author would find some difficulty to prove that generally the Gentiles were so concerned for lesser sins, as he pretends. 9. Had they been so well agreed, as he pretends, about repentance, and had this been the design of their sacrifices, I do not well understand why our author should make such opposition betwixt sacrifices and repentance, as elsewhere he does; when he is speaking of several faults of the Heathen priests, he subjoins—"*Sed et hoc pejus, quod quum ex vera virtute, vel hinc ubi excide-*"*rint ex pœnitentia vera, pacem internam comparare debuissent,* "*ad ritus & sacra, quæ ipsi (Scil. Sacerdotes) peragerent res per-*"*ducta est, &c.*"* Here it would seem plain, that the people came at length, if not of their own accord, yet by the persuasion of the priests, to overlook repentance, and reject it, substituting other things in its room; and when once this obtained in one generation, it is like it might spread and obtain in after ages, being transmitted from father to son, and the priests carrying on the cheat; and so at least the world in all ages hath not made any account of repentance as the only expiation. Again, it would seem from our author, that sacrifices did not import, and were not evidences of repentance, but on the contrary, means invented to make people neglect it.† I do not well understand how they, who, if we may believe our author, were all so fully agreed about repentance, and were so prone and inclined to it, that their minds run into it without any persuasion, should need so much the priests' persuasion, and be easily drawn off from what they accounted so available. Let us hear our author. Speaking of man's recovery from sin, says he, "*Atque* "*instaurationem hanc fieri debere ex pœnitentia, docuere tum philo-*"*sophi, tum sacerdotes, ita ut hanc agendam animamque purifican-*"*dam, sed non sine eorum ministerio, sæpius inculcarent. Bene* "*quidem, si pœnitentiam satis populo persuasissent, quod neuti-*"*quam tamen ab illis factum fuit; licet adeo prona in eam sit an-*"*ima humana, ut etiam nullo suadente, in foro interno ex gratia* "*divina, conscientiæ que dictamine decernatur.*"‡ Our author tells us, that the people's sacrifices were an argument of their repentance, as we heard above, and that the priests persuaded them to it, and that they were all agreed, that repentance was the only atone-

* Del. Rel. Gent. pag. 10.—"But this too is worse, that when they ought to "have sought inward peace by true virtue, or when they had fallen from it, "by true penitence, the matter was reduced to rites and sacrifices performed "by the priests."

† Ibid. pag. 197.

‡ "And both the philosophers and the priests taught that this recovery "must be brought about by repentance, so that they often inculcated that "this ought to be done and the soul purified, but not without their ministry. "It would have been well indeed if they had sufficiently persuaded the people "to penitence, which however was not done by them, although the human "mind is so prone to it, that even without any adviser, it is determined in the "inward court by the divine grace and the dictates of conscience."

ment, and that the mind of man needs no admonisher to persuade it to repentance; and yet he tells us likewise in the passages adduced, That repentance was quite laid by, sacrifices and rites put in its place, the people so ignorant of the worth of it as to let it go, and so backward as not to look after it, unless the priests had pressed it more, (and yet we are told they inculcated it oft) and in fine, the priests so negligent that they quite neglected their duty. How to knit all this together I know not. I do think it were easier to make these words overthrow our author's argument, than to reconcile them with themselves, with truth, reason, or experience; but I spare reflections that offer themselves. Before our author, or the Deists, make any thing of this argument, they must prove, "That sacrifices universally obtained—That sacrifices were every where offered to the One True GOD—That those sacrifices were symbolical of repentance," as another Deist has it, and several other things taken notice of above.

ARTICLE V.

That there are rewards and punishments after this Life.

WE are now come to our author's last article. He is not very constant in expressing himself about this article, and how far it was agreed to. Sometimes he pretends, that these rewards were *eternal happiness*, and that this was agreed; sometimes only it was agreed that there were rewards and punishments after this life; and sometimes he words it yet more modestly, that they *expected* rewards and punishments, either in *this life*, or *after* it. So page 203, when he enters expressly to treat of this article, *Et quidem præmium bonis & supplicium malis, (N. B.) vel in hac vita, vel post hanc vitam dari, statuebant Gentiles.*"*

And indeed when he comes to tell us how far it is determinable in this matter by the light of nature, he makes this article of very little signification. "Non imperite quidem, bonos, bona, malos ma-"la, vel in æternum manere affirmabant veteres. At quis locum "præmii, vel pœnæ ostenderit?—Quis supplicii genus conjectave-"rit?" (And the same is perfectly the case as to rewards, though our author waves that, for what cause it is not hard to conjecture.) "Quis tandem durationis terminum posuerit?"†

* "And indeed the Heathens were of opinion, that there would be a reward "to the good, and a punishment to the wicked, either in this life or after "this life."

† De Relig Gent. pag. 210.—"The ancients indeed not unskilfully affirm-"ed that good things awaited the good, and evil the wicked, even for ever. "But who could show the place of reward or punishment? Who could guess "the kind of punishment? * * * Who at last can fix the term of their "duration?

All that he pretends to have been received, was barely this, "That there are rewards and punishments after this life." Let us hear himself, "Et quidem præter solennem illam notitiam commu-"nem, nempe, deum bonum justumq; esse, adeoq; præmium vel "pœnam tum in hac vita, tum post hanc vitam, pro actionibus, imo "& cogitationibus suis unicuique remetiri, nihil quod verisimile ma-"gis esset ab illis statui possee decernimus."* But he tells us, that by the additions they made to this, and proceeding to determine further than they knew, even this came to be called in question, (which, by the way, ruins our author's cause as to this article) but let himself speak, "Dum hæc philosophi, illa sacerdotes, "alia demum poetæ adjicerent, tota inclinata in casumq; prona nu-"tavit veritatis fabrica. Si semet satis coercuissent Gentilium co-"riphæi, neminem, puto, dissentientem habuissent.†

He asserts very little, we see, to have universally obtained as to this article, and he seems to do more than insinuate, that even, as to *this little*, at least, in process of time there were some, and even not a few dissenters: For I know not what meaning else to put upon the "whole fabric of truth nodding," and "inclining to fall:" And this is to quit the cause. We shall however notice his arguments, but the more shortly, because of what has been already observed.

First then, he pretends, that the persuasion of this is *innate*,‡ that the reasons of it are so obvious, and the arguments leading to it are so evident, that they could not but agree as to this.‖

But I have already shown, that every thing that is evident, or was so to our author and his companions and followers, was not so to the ancient sages. I guess that he learned most of these arguments he insists on from some others than the Heathen philosophers, or if they managed them so well, he would have done right to have pointed us to the places where they have done so. But when he has done this it will not prove an *universal consent:* For we are concerned in some other besides philosophers. As for what he pretends of this persuasion's being *innate*, I think he has said much to disprove it himself; or if it be, I think the presages of future misery in the mind of man, have been much more strong than of happiness. And in a word, he only says it was innate, but

* "And indeed besides that solemn common notice, that there is a God "who is good and just, and consequently will reward and punish every one, "both in this life and after this life, according to his actions, and even—to "his thoughts, we think that nothing more probable could be determined by "them."

† "While the philosophers added some things, the priests others, and the "poets others further, the whole fabric of truth was ruined and fell to the "ground. If the leaders of the Heathens could have restrained themselves, "I think that they would have had nobody differing from them."

‡ De Reg. Gent. page 211. ‖ Ibid. page 4.

does not prove it. Yea, if this did not universally obtain, according to our author's own doctrine, it was not innate.

Next he insists on the custom of *deifying heroes*, and placing them among the number of the immortal gods. This he hints at frequently. But this did not universally obtain as to time or place, and so hit not the point in the least. All were not so dignified, nay, not all that were *good;* nor does it prove, that even all that people, among whom this custom prevailed, were of that opinion; but only the persons principally concerned. And indeed it were easy to shew that they were not all of this opinion, which may possibly be made appear in the next chapter.

His next argument is deduced from a few testimonies of poets and philosophers asserting a future state, which he has scattered up and down, here and there. But what is this to all the world? Do the poets' fancies of *Elysian fields, Styx* and the like, give us the true measure of the sentiments of the world?

Thus I have viewed our author's proofs of his five articles, and their reception in the world. I have not knowingly omitted any thing of moment, advanced by him for his opinion. I shall conclude this chapter with a few general reflections on our author's conduct in this affair.

I do not a little suspect a writer of controversy, when he huddles up, and endeavors to conceal the state of the question, and shifts it upon occasion. It is always a sign either that his judgment is naught, or that his designs are not fair and good. I do not believe that our noble author's abilities required any such mean shifts, if the badness of the cause he unhappily undertook, had not obliged him: But that this is the course he steers, is evident. Now he seems to undertake to shew us, what the most universal apprehensions of men were in matters of religion; and anon, he pretends to tell us what the more discerning persons, among the Heathens thought; and thus shifts the scene, as it is for his purpose.

It is further remarkable, that our author has crammed in a great deal of philosophical learning, which makes nothing at all to the main purpose of the book. He has writ a book of 230 pages to prove that these five articles obtained; whereas all the arguments he addúces, scarce take up ten of them. The rest is a collection of historical and philological learning about the Heathen gods and worship. He only drops here and there the shadow of an argument; and then when we are some pages by it, he tells us he has demonstrated this already, and we are referred back to some of the preceding arguments; and that is, we are bid *search for a needle amongst a heap of hay.* This looks exceeding suspicious like.*

* Read the conclusion of our author's 8. Cap. pag. 54. and compare it with the Cap.

Again, I do not like frequent and repeated assertions in a disputant without arguments. Fewer assertions and more arguments, if the cause had permitted, would have done better. It is said that some by telling a lie often over, come at length to believe it to be true. I am apt to think that the oft asserting over and over again what he undertakes to prove, might go further toward his own conviction, than all the arguments that he has advanced.

Our author undertakes to give us an account what the Heathens' thoughts as to those articles were, and what led them to these apprehensions; but after all, you shall find nothing but an account of some of their practices, with our author's glosses put on them, and the reason that, not they, but he thinks may be alleged in justification of their practices and opinions. If he had dealt fairly he would have told us in their own words, what their sentiments were, and likewise what were their inducements that led them into those opinions; but to obtrude, as every where he doth, his conjectures and strained interpretations, as their meaning, is perfectly intolerable.

It is indeed true, that our author affords us several quotations from the Heathens; but doth he, by this means, give us a fair representation of the point in controversy, and their sentiments about it? No. If his reader is so simple as to take this for granted, he deceives himself. I know it is the custom of some others, as well as our author, though perhaps on better designs, to quote some passages from Heathen authors, in order to shew their agreement with Christianity, and to what a length the mere light of nature brought them; but hereby they do deceive the reader: So Cicero's testimony to the immortality of the soul, is alleged by our author, pag. 192, "*Quemadmodum igitur haud alius Deus,* "*haud alia virtus, ab Gentilibus, quam ab nostris, olim celebra-* "*tur, ita certe communis utriusque spes immortalitatis fuit. Di-* "*sertim Cicero 2 de. Leg. ait, animi hominum sunt immortales:* "*Sed fortium bonorum divini et alibi in Lib. de Senectute ait:* "*Non est lugenda mors, quum immortalitas consequitur.*"* Now if any one should think that this testimony of Cicero gives a full account of his apprehensions about immortality, they would be very far deceived: For in his first book of *Tusculan Questions*, where he discusses this point *ex professo*, he discovers indeed an inclination to believe it, and a desire that it may be true; yet such a hesitation about it, that he knows not how to persuade himself of it, as we shall show perhaps in the next chapter. In like

* "As therefore there was no other God, nor any other virtue formerly "celebrated among the Gentiles than by our writers, so surely both of them "had a common hope of immortality; for Cicero says expressly, 2d de Legi- "bus, that the souls of men are immortal, and those of the brave and good "are divine: and elsewhere in his book on Old Age he says, that death which "immediately follows, is not to be mourned for."

manner Plato is cited by him, and many others to the same purpose: But what a sad uncertainty both Socrates and Plato were in about this point, I shall fully demonstrate in the next chapter. I shall here set down only one notable instance of the unfairness of this way of procedure. Our author quotes Solon's testimony for *future felicity*, pag. 194. Let us hear our author's own words: "*Pulchram distinctionem inter felicem sive fortunatem & beatum* "*affert ex Solone Herodotus Lib.* 1. *Ubi Cræso respondens, ait* "*neminem dignum esse qui vocetur beatus antequam* τελευτησει "τον Βιον *in hoc est, vitam suam bene clauserit; adeoque* ευτυχη "*sive fortunatum hac in vita, nequaquam* Ολβιον *sive beatum* "*ante obitem ejus hominum appellari posse. Huic concinit Ovi-* "*dius,*

Diciq; beatus
Ante obitum nemo, supremaque funera, debet.

"*Proprie quippe loquendo, nemo beatus ante mortem: Ita ut* "*beati inter Gentiles vocarentur, qui in Elysiis campis sempiter-* "*no æva fruerentur.*"*

Now here we have a proof to the full of our author's conduct in his quotations, and the improvement of them. Was not Solon clear that there was a state of happiness after this life? Who can doubt it, after our author has thus proved it? But what if Solon for all this, confined happiness to this life, defining the happy man, "One who is competently furnished with outward things, acts honestly, and lives temperately;"† which definition no less a person than Aristotle approves. And in all Solon's speech to Cresus, there is not one word, if it were not disingenuously or ignorantly quoted, that gives us the least ground to believe that Solon once so much as dreamed of *happiness after this life*. Stanley in his life of Solon recites from Herodotus this whole speech, and the story to which it relates.‡ Crœsus, king of Lydia, in Asia the less, sends for Solon upon the fame of his wisdom. Solon comes. The vain king dazzled with the lustre of his own greatness, asked the wise Solon, Whether ever he saw any man happier than himself, who was possessed of so great riches and power? Solon named several, particularly Tellus the Athenian citizen, Cleobis and Bito, two

* "Herodotus from Solon quotes a fine distinction betwixt a lucky or "fortunate and happy man, in his first book, when Solon answering Crœsus, "says that nobody deserves to be called happy, till he has ended his life well, "and consequently that although a man may be called lucky or fortunate in "this life, but that he ought not to be called happy before his death. And "Ovid agrees with him, "Nor ought any to be called happy before his death, "and the last ceremony of his funeral." For properly speaking none is happy before his death. So that those were called happy among the Gentiles "who enjoyed an eternal life in the Elysian fields."

† Stanley's Life of Solon, page 26.

‡ Ibid, page 28, 29.

brothers; the story of whom he relates to Crœsus, and gives the reasons why he looked on them as happy, without ever a hint of their enjoying any happiness after this life. At which Crœsus was angry thinking himself undervalued; whereupon Solon thus addresses him—"Do you inquire, Crœsus, concerning human affairs "of me who, know that divine providence is severe, and full of "alteration? In process of time, we see many things we would "not; we suffer many things we would not. Let us propose "seventy years as the term of man's life, which years consist of "25,200 days, besides the additional month; if we make one "year longer than another by that month, to make the time ac-"cord, the additional months belonging to those years will be "thirty-five, and the days 1050,—whereof one is not in all things "like another. So that every man, O Crœsus, is miserable! You "appear to me very rich, and are king over many; but the ques-"tion you demand I cannot resolve, until I hear you have ended "your days happily; he that hath much wealth is not happier "than he who gets his living from day to day, unless fortune con-"tinuing all those good things to him, grant that he die well.— "There are many men very rich, yet unfortunate; many of mo-"derate estates, fortunate; of whom he who abounds in wealth, "and is not happy, exceeds the fortunate only in two things, the "other him in many; the rich is more able to satisfy his desires, "and to overcome great injuries; yet the fortunate excels him.— "He cannot indeed inflict hurt on others, and satisfy his own de-"sires; his good fortune debars him of those: But he is free from "evils, healthful, happy in his children, and beautiful; if to this, "a man dies well, that is, he whom you seek, who deserves to be "called happy; before death he cannot be stiled happy, but for-"tunate; yet for one man to obtain all this is impossible, as one "country cannot furnish itself with all things: Some it hath, "others it wants; that which hath most is the best, so in men not "one is perfect; what one hath the other wants. He who hath "constantly most, and at last quietly departs this life, in my opin-"ion, O king, deserves to bear that name. In every thing we "must have regard to the end, whither it tends; for many to "whom God dispenseth all good fortunes, he at last utterly sub-"verts." Thus we see the whole passage, in which it is evident that Solon meant only, that to make a man happy, it is requisite he continue in the enjoyment of a competency till death, and that then he die well, that is, quietly and in good respect or credit with men. That this is the meaning of dying well according to Solon, is not only evident from the strain of the discourse, but from the stories of Tellus, Cleobis and Bito, whom he instances as happy men, because of their creditable deaths. The first he tells us died in defence of his country, after he had put his enemies to flight,

" he died nobly, and the Athenians buried him in the place where he fell, with much honor." The two brothers, Cleobis and Bito, drew their mother's chariot forty-five stadia, and with the stress died next morning in the temple, and so died honorably. And any that will give himself the trouble to read Ovid's story of Acteon, in his third book of his Metamorphosis will see it clear as the day, that he meant just the same. He represents how happy one might have thought Cadmus, considering how many things he had that were desirable in his lot, a kingdom, relations, and children, had not Acteon his grand-child's fate interrupted the series of his joys, and made him miserable. Whereupon the poet concludes, " Till death a man cannot be called happy ;" that is, till a man has without interruption, enjoyed a tract of prosperity, and dies creditably, without any mixture of ill fortune.

Jam stabant Thebæ : Poteras jam Cadme, videri
Exilio felix : Soceri tibi Marsque Venusque
Contigerant : Huc adde genus de conjuge tanta,
Tot natos, natasque, & pignora cara nepotes.
Hos quoque jam juvenes : sed scilicet ultima semper
Expectanda dies homini est, dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo, supremaque funera debet.
Prima nepos inter res tot tibi, Cadme, secundas
Causa fuit luctus, &c.*

And thus he proceeds to tell the story of Acteon's being transformed into a hart. Thus we see with what candor our author quotes the Heathens. Here he has first broke off some words from their context, whereby the unwary reader is tempted to believe, that the speaker meant quite another thing than really he did ; and then obtrudes this false sense of one or two men's words, who were wise men, and in their thoughts far above the vulgar, as the harmonious meaning of the Gentile world.

Nor do I think it strange that our author should serve us so, seeing he was prepossessed in favor of the Heathen's religion before he began to read their books. For he tells us in the entry of his book, the very first sentence of it, and more fully in the rest of the first chapter, That he was at once very concerned for the *divine providence*, and withal fully convinced that it could not be maintained without there were a *religion common to all men ;* or, as his words formerly quoted by us express it, " unless every man was provided with the means that were needful for attaining future

*. Ovid. Metamorph. Lib. 3.—" And now Thebes was built ; now, O Cadmus, you might seem to be happy in your banishment. Mars and Venus were your father and mother in law ; add to this, a race from so illustrious a consort, so many sons and daughters, and grand-children, dear pledges, and these too already youths ; but truly a man must always look for his last day, and nobody can be called happy before his death, and last funeral rites. Amidst so much prosperity, O Cadmus, a grandson was the first cause of mourning to you."

happiness;" so he went to the books of the Heathens under a persuasion that there was a common religion there, could he be so lucky as to light on it, and therefore no doubt he drew and strained things to his purpose, both rites and words. Thus he begins his discourse about expiation: "Quosdam Gentilium ritus, qui in sensum saniorem trahi possunt, jam tractaturus,"* &c. And indeed he draws them to a sounder sense than ever they put on them. But, after all, *forced prayers are not good for the soul*, says the Scots proverb. And from one thus prepossessed, we can expect no fair account of the Gentiles' sentiments.

Which, by the way, gives me occasion to remark, that if any one desires to understand the mind of the Heathen philosophers and sages, they should read them themselves, or Heathens' accounts of their lives and actions, rather than those done by Christians; because very often when Christians write their lives, they have some design, and they strain every thing in the philosophers to a compliance either with their designs or apprehensions. The Heathen writers being under no influence from the scripture light, do plainly narrate things as they are, (not being so sensible of what things may reflect really upon the persons concerning whom they write; the light of nature not representing clearly that wickedness which is in many of their actions and opinions) and scruple not to tell them out plainly: whereas Christians, being aware how odious such and such practices or principles are, dare scarce tell such things of those famous men, as they were really guilty of; because they know how deep a stain it will leave on them, by those who are taught the evil of them by the scriptures.

I shall add this reflection more: If any one would conclude from our author's confidence in some places of his book, where he talks of many reasons that he has advanced, and that he has demonstrated this and that; if, I say, from this they would infer, that he was fully persuaded in his own mind, about these *five articles*, that they *universally obtained*, and are *sufficient*, he would very far mistake our author, who, throughout his book, sufficiently betrays his *uncertainty* about them, and that he wanted not a fear lest it should not be true, as some things afterwards to be pleaded will show.—But lest this should seem to be said altogether without ground, I shall single out one instance of our author's wavering in this matter, reserving others to another occasion. It is page 19, where, after our author has discoursed of the *more famous names* of the *true God*, and showed that the Gentiles applied them all, save one, to the *sun*, he concludes thus, "Hæc saltem fuere solenniora Summi Dei nomina inter Hebræos extantia, quæ etiam ad solem,

* De Rel. Gent. pag. 105.—"Being now about to treat of some rites of the Heathens, which may be drawn into a sound sense."

Sabazio excepto, a Gentilibus reducta fuisse, ex supra-allatis conjecturam facere licet. Adeo ut quamvis superius sole numen sub hisce præsertim vocabulis coluerunt Hebræi, solem neque aliud numen intellexerunt Gentiles, nisi fortasse in sole, tanquam præclaro Dei Summi specimine, & sensibili ejus, ut Plato vocat, simulacro, Deum summum ab illis cultum fuisse censeas: Quod non facile abnuerim, præsertim cum symbolica fuerit omnis fere religio veterum."* But perhaps though our author was not well confirmed in his opinion, when he began his book, yet he came to some more fixedness before he got to the end of it. Well, let us hear him, in his censure of the Gentiles' religion in the last chapter of his book, where speaking of the worshipping the heavens, the sun, &c. he gives his judgment thus: "De hoc quidem dogmate, idem ac de priore censeo: Nempe, nisi symbolicus fuerit, erroneum mihi prorsus videtur esse cultum illum. Cæterum quod symbolici fuerunt olim hujusmodi cultus, multæ, quas supra adduximus, suadere videntur rationes: Sed suo judicio heic quoque utatur lector."†— What more uncertainty could any betray, than our author doth in these words? And indeed here we have enough to overthrow his whole book: for if this first article fall all will fall with it, as we may see afterwards.

But it is now time that we draw to a conclusion of this chapter, having sufficiently enervated our author's arguments, so far as we could discern them. If any of them seem to be omitted, I presume they will be found to be of no great consideration, and of an easy despatch to any that is acquainted with this controversy. Our author's way of writing made it somewhat difficult to find his arguments. And indeed upon serious reflection, I can scarce understand at what our author aimed in this way of writing. He could never rationally expect that this would clear the subject he had undertaken. I had almost concluded that his design behoved to be an ostentation of his knowledge of the Heathens' religion, in order to make his authority have the more weight, and to scare people

* De Rel. Gent. pag. 19.—"Those at least were the more solemn names of the Supreme God, that we find among the Hebrews; all which except Sabazino, we may conjecture from what has been quoted above, was applied by the Gentiles to the sun. So that although the Hebrews worshipped a deity superior to the sun, especially under those names, yet the Gentiles understood by them the sun and no other deity, unless perhaps in the sun, as an illustrious representation and sensible image, of the Supreme God, as Plato calls him, under which figure we may suppose that the Supreme God was worshipped by them. Which I would not easily contradict, especially as almost all the religion of the ancients was symbolical."

† Ibid, pag. 223.—"Concerning this doctrine indeed, I am of the same opinion as concerning the former, to wit, that unless that worship was symbolical, it seems to me to have been quite erroneous. But the many reasons which we have adduced above, seem to persuade us to believe that worship of this kind of old was symbolical. But let the reader use his own judgment in this case likewise."

from entertaining a different opinion concerning the religion of the Heathen world, from that which one who had so industriously searched into their writings, owned. But if this was it, our author has missed it. And I think instead of doing the Deists' cause any service this way, he has rather hurt it: for every one that shall peruse this work with attention, and find how great our author's learning, diligence and industry have been, and yet how little he has been able to do, they will infer the weakness of the cause he has undertaken, and conclude, that the cause could bear no better defence, and that therefore a weak and indefensible cause has baffled our author's great abilities and application. For

——si Pergama dextra
Defendi possent, etiam hac defensa fuissent.*

C. Blount and they who have come after our author, as has been said before, do but copy after him, and take his notions upon trust, but others will be somewhat more wise, and will look whom they trust in a matter of this importance.

CHAP. XV.

Wherein it is made appear that Herbert's Five Articles did not universally obtain.

WE have in the preceeding chapter sufficiently showed how weak our noble author's proofs are of his *universal religion*. It now remains that we prove that what he pretends is indeed false.—Our work here is far more easy, than what our author undertook. He asserts that *providence* cannot be maintained, unless all mankind are provided in the means needful for attaining future happiness, and he is likewise clear, that less cannot be allowed sufficient for this end than the five articles mentioned, wherefore he pretends that all the world agreed in owning these. Now to have made this last appear, it was needful it should be proven by induction of all particular nations, that they thus agreed, and that as to all times —but this would have been somewhat too laborious. We maintain that all did not agree in the acknowledgment of those five articles: And this is evinced, if we can show only one nation dissenting from any one of them. But we shall not be so nice upon the point, as only to mention *one nation*, or disprove *one article*. Let us take a separate view of each article, and see what the judgment of some nations were concerning them.

* "——If Troy could have been defended by any right hand, it would have been defended by this one."

ARTICLE I.

All the World did not agree in owning the One True Supreme GOD.

I MIGHT for proof of this, only desire any person to read our author's book, and there he would find this sufficiently clear. But I shall shortly confirm it to the conviction of any, who has not a mind to shut his eyes, by the few following observations as to the sentiments of the world in this case.

1. It is most evident to any one, who will give himself the trouble to read ever so little of the writings of the Gentiles, that many nations, I had almost said most nations, did hold *a plurality of eternal and independent beings*, on whom they depended, and which they called gods in the properest sense of the word. Herodotus quoted by our author tells us, "That all the Africans worshiped "the sun and moon only"—"Soli & lunæ solummodo sacrificant, "& quidem Afri universi."*. And Plato quoted likewise by our author, a few pages after, in his dialogue, which he calls Cratylus, tells us, "Qui Græciam primi incoluere, ii videntur mihi illos solum deos existimasse, quos nunc etiam barbari multi, pro diis habent, solem, lunam, terram, astra, cœlum."† Of this also the ancient inscriptions mentioned by our author,‡ and more particularly by Hornbeck in his treatise *de Conversione Gentilium*, is a proof. —"Soli invicto & lunæ æternæ deo soli invicto Mythræ & omnipo- "tenti, deo Mythræ."|| Mythras was a name given to the sun by the Persians, as our author proves. And if we may believe Maimonides, the Sabeans owned no God save the stars. "Notum est "Abrahamum patrem nostrum educatum esse in fide Sabæorum, "qui statuerunt nullum esse Deum, præter stellas.** Nor were the Egyptians of another mind. Diodorus's testimony is worth our notice to this purpose,—"Igitur primi illi homines olim in "Ægypto geniti, hinc mundi ornatum conspicientes, admirantes- "que universorum naturam, duos esse deos, & eos æternos arbitra- "tri sunt, solem & lunam: Et illum quidem Osiridem, hanc Isidim "certa nominis ratione appellarunt."††

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* De Rel. Gent. page 36.

† Ibid. pag. 39.—"Those who first inhabited Greece, appear to me to have "thought that these alone were gods, which many barbarians still hold to be "gods, to wit, the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars, the heaven."

‡ Ibid. pag. 26. || Hornbeck, pag. 19.

** More Nevochim, referente. Hornbec ubi supra. pag. 17.—"It is well "known that our father Abraham was educated in the faith of the Sabeans, "who thought that there was no God except the stars."

†† Owen Theolog. Lib. 3. Cap. 5. Herbert pag. 39.—"Therefore those first "men that were produced in Egypt, observing from thence the beauty of the "world, and admiring the nature of the universe, concluded that there were "two gods, the sun and the moon, and they called the one Osiris, and the "other Isis, giving certain reasons for those names."

Thus we see what the apprehensions of several nations were, and how harmonious they are in dissenting from our author's assertion. It had been easy to have alledged many more testimonies even from our author against himself: But we aim at brevity.

2. It is not improbable, that some nations, though they might allow some priority of one of their gods to the rest, yet did not think that there was any such great inequality, at least amongst their more notable deities, as could infer the supremacy of one to the rest, and their dependence on, and subordination to him. We find every where equal honors paid, and equal or very little different titles of respect given to the sun or moon. So that it is very likely, though they might give the sun the preference in point of order, yet they did not apprehend any such great inequality, as seems needful betwixt one *supreme being* and his *dependents*. The people of Mexico in America, though they worship many gods, yet look on their two principal ones, whom they call *Vitzilopuchtli* and *Tezcatlipuca*, as two brothers. "*Mexicani primo colere soliti fu-*
"*erunt immanem deorum turbam, bis mille referunt, inter quos*
"*duo præcipui Vitzilopuchtli & Tezcatlipuca duo fratres, quorum*
"*alter rerum providentiæ, alter bellis præerat.*"* And the inhabitants of Darien, St. Martha and other places thereabouts, own only the sun, and the moon as his wife. Further, it is owned by our author several times, that many nations hold two first beings, one *good* and another *evil*, whom they call *Ve-Jupiter*, and by the Persian Magi he was called *Arimanus*. Though our author thinks a softer construction is to be put on their meaning, than to charge them with making their Ve-Jupiter equal with the good God :† But we know our author must not be allowed to interpret, unless he can give good grounds for his opinion about the meaning of the Gentiles, which in this case he doth not once attempt, and we know that some looked on this *wicked principle* as the *supreme*, as we shall show anon; and I think it will be hard to clear some of them, yea even no less a person than Plutarch, from making them *equal* and both *infinite;* if we may believe a late author, who tells us, "That as for Plutarch, one of the soberest of the philosophers, he "was the horridest Polytheist of them all; for he asserts two Su-"preme Anti-gods; one infinitely good, and the other infinitely "evil."‡ Moreover, some of the Deists do not think this opinion destitute of probability, as we have noted before.‖ But whatever there is as to this, yet,

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* Hornbeck, pag. 70.—The Mexicans at first used to worship an immense "number of gods, to wit, two thousand, the chief among which were Vitzi-"lopuchtli and Tezcatlipuca, two brothers, the one of whom had the care of "the world, and the other presided over wars."

† De Relig. Gent. pag. 163. ‡ Nichol's Confer. Part 2. pag. 57.

‖ Oracles of Reason. pag. 194.

3. It is certain that many of them, notwithstanding the huge number of gods they maintained, were utterly ignorant of the *true God*. This is so evident, that I cannot but wonder at our author's impudence in denying it, especially, after the testimonies we have already quoted from him. We have heard already that the Egyptians and Grecians of old owned no other gods besides the sun, moon and stars. And we have heard the same of the Sabeans, of several Americans and inhabitants of Africa; and Cæsar tells us the same of the Germans—"*Deorum numero eos solum ducunt, "quos cernunt, & quorum opibus aperte juvantur, solem & vul-"canum & lunam; reliquos ne fama quidem acceperunt.*"* Yea, our author is forced to make a fair confession, and contradict himself in the entry of his fourth chapter, where speaking of the Gentiles and their worshipping of the sun, he delivers himself thus: "*Incongruum demum existimaverunt, ut qui cultum ab om-"nibus flagitaret, a cultoribus suis sese absconderet Deus. So-"lem igitur Deum fere omnes Gentiles statuebant, non summum "quidem, sed summo proximum, ejusque præclarissimam ico-"nem, licet alii, mundum totum, tanquam Deo plenum, summi "numinis imaginem speciosam apprime præ se ferre contende-"rent.*"† Here you see our author positive, that they put not the sun in the room of the One true God: None of them did it; but we shall hear him in the very next sentence tell us, that they did discard the true God, and very absurdly put another in his place. "*Certe uti olim dictum* (says our author) *qui solem vice "summi Dei coluerunt, perinde fecere, ac illi qui ad aulam po-"tentissimi principis accedentes, quem primum amictu splendido "indutum cernerunt, regium illi cultum deferendum existimaver-"unt.*"‡ And our author knows full well that at Athens there was an altar erected to *the unknown God*; and Paul expressly tells them, that this *unknown God*, was the *true God*. *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* What says our author to this? He directly contradicts the apostle, and then makes him a compliment, that is well nigh to nonsense. "Cæ-

* De Bello Gallico, Lib. 6.—"They reckon in the number of the gods only "those whom they see, and by whose power they are evidently assisted, "that is the sun, the fire, and the moon. They have not so much as heard "of the other gods."

† De Relig. Gent. pag. 20.—"In fine, they reckoned it incongruous to sup-"pose, that God, who required worship from all men, should hide himself "from his worshippers. Therefore almost all the Heathens thought that the "sun was a god; not indeed the supreme one, but next to the supreme, and "his most illustrious image; although others maintained that the whole "world, as being full of God, bore a distinct impression of his image."

‡ "Surely, as was said long ago, those who worshipped the sun instead of "the Supreme Deity, acted in the same manner as those who going to the "court of a most powerful prince, should think that the first person they "saw splendidly dressed was the king, and to be reverenced as such."

" terum (says he) duriuscule Deus ignotus Atheniensium ad De-
" um Judæorum refertur: Ut ita priora S. S. loca Deum Genti-
" lium eundum ac communem omnium Deum evincant. Nam De-
" us ille ignotus Atheniensium alius certe fuit, (this is a plain con-
" tradiction to the apostle's assertion) atque ideo puto ara donatus,
" ne aliquis forsan incultus apud illos esset Deus: Ut belle tamen
" hinc instruendi Gentiles occasionem captarit apostolus. Neque
" dubium mihi est, quin e libro naturæ edocti Deum Summum tum
" agnoverint, tum coluerint Gentiles."* Thus we see *quam belle*, how pleasantly our author proceeds. He tells us that it is hard to think, though the apostle expressly says so, that this *unknown God* was the God of the Jews. But if we will not stand to our author's word, then he tells us what some scriptures he had formerly cited prove; viz. Acts x. *passim* Acts xvii. 28, 29. Rom. i. 19. But we have above shewed, that these are not so for our author's purpose. Well, what then remains? Nothing, but only this, "I have no doubt," says he, "but they knew the true "God." But our author's certainty will not satisfy another; and we just now shewed, that our author was not so fully sure as he pretends to be in this place. But yet our apostle, he tells us, took very handsomely occasion hence to instruct the Gentiles; that is, if we believe our author, he took occasion from a false supposition to instruct them. But it is a kindness that he used any compliment, though a ridiculous one. But leaving this, I go on.

4. They among the nations, who owned One Supreme God, did frequently, if not for most part, put some others in the room of the True God. Some made the World God. This is what Balbus the Stoick sets up for with all his might in Cicero's second book *de Nat. Deor.* throughout. "Atqui certe nihil omnium re-
" rum melius est, Mundo, nihil præstabilius, nihil pulchrius: Nec
" solum nihil est, nec excogitari quidem quicquam melius potest: Et
" si ratione & sapientia nihil est melius, necesse est hæc inesse eo,
" quod optimum esse concedimus:"† And therefore a little after he concludes the *World* God. Cicero himself was of the same

* "It was rather somewhat hard to refer the unknown God of the Athenians to the God of the Jews, as the former places of holy scripture prove that the God of the Gentiles was the same with that of the Jews, and the common God of all men. For this unknown God of the Athenians was certainly another one, and I suppose was honored with an altar for this reason, that no god perhaps might be without worship among them. Yet how prettily does the apostle take an opportunity from hence of instructing the Gentiles. Nor is it doubtful with me, that the Gentiles, taught by the book of nature, both acknowledged and worshipped the Supreme God."

† "And certainly none of all things is better than the World, nothing is more excellent, nothing is more beautiful; and not only nothing exists, but nothing can be imagined that is better than the World. And if nothing is better than Reason and Wisdom, these qualities must necessarily be conceived to belong to that which we acknowledge to be the best of all things."

mind: For when Velleius the Epicurean had been heard and refuted by Cotta the Academic; and Epicurus's wild opinions about the gods, had been fully exposed, which is the subject of the first book; Balbus the Stoick proposes and defends the Stoicks' opinion about the nature, being, and number of the gods, and their providence, and defends it after the best manner he can, (where, by the way, there is not one word of the *true God*, but a full discovery of the grossest ignorance of him, and the greatest wickedness and folly in asserting a plurality of gods, and parting all the excellencies of the true God among them.) This makes up the second book. In the third book, Cotta the Academic, disputes against, and exposes the Stoicks' opinion, as defended by Balbus; and in the last sentence of the book, Cicero gives his επιχρισις or censure of the whole in these words, "Hæc cum essent dicta, ita "dicessimus, ut Velleo Cottæ disputatio verior, mihi Balbi ad "veritatis similitudinem videretur esse propensior."* Velleius the Epicurean favours Cotta, who disproved the whole opinions about the gods, and put no better in their place. And Cicero was pleased with Balbus, who maintained the Stoicks' sentiments. What they were we have just now noted. And whether Plato, Aristotle, yea and Socrates were not of the same opinion, is not so very clear. Certain it is, that they paid a little too great respect to the *world*, if they were not. Let us hear our author. *Plato in Timæo et Legibus dicit & mundum deum esse & cælum & astra, &c.*† But whatever were their sentiments, it is not of so great consequence to the question under consideration, to spend time in inquiring, since it is evident that many were of this opinion. Others thought that the *heaven* was God, and this is owned by Ennius the poet, quoted by our author, in that noted verse so frequently mentioned by Cicero, *Aspice hoc Sublime Candens, quem omnes invocant Jovem.*‡ And there also he tells us of an old inscription found at Rome, *Optimus Maximus Cælus Æternus.* Thus we see the heavens dignified with those very epithets, which our author pretends to have been peculiar to the Supreme God. And he tells us, that some are of opinion, that Pythagoras inclined this way: and our author leaves it in doubt. If Aristotle and Plato were not of this mind, that the heavens were the Supreme God, as we see some others were; yet they did own heaven for God, and to be worshipped as such. "*Sed non solum-*"*modi cælum divino honore colendum decreverant sacerdotes, sed* "*et ipsi philosophi celebriores, adeo ut non Stygarita tantum, sed*

* "When those things had been said, we parted, but so that the discourse "of Cotta seemed to Velleius to be nearer the truth, but that of Balbus seemed to me to approach more nearly to the likeness of truth."

† De Relig. Gent. pag. 39.

‡ Ibid, pag. 54.

" *Eadem ejus præceptor Ith statuerint.*"* But the most prevalent opinion was, *that the sun was the one true and Supreme God.* That many, and perhaps most nations thought so, the testimonies above alleged fully prove, and we have heard our author confessing it as to some. I shall only add a few remarks more to this purpose. There is a quotation of Macrobius, which I find in our author, that is worth noticing, "Assyri (inquit Macr.) quem Deum "Summum Maximumq; venerantur, Adad nomen dederunt, ejus "nominis interpretatio significat *unus*. Hunc ergo ut potentissi- "mum adorant Deum, sed subjungunt deam nomine Atergatin; "omnemque potestatem hisce duobus attribuunt, solem terramque "intelligentes."† And our author further acquaints us as to the Persians, "Quod Persæ duo principia statuebant, Oromazen scil. "tanquam boni fontem: Et Arimanium, mali.—Inter quos medi- "um & quasi arbitrum posuere solem."‡ I have in the close of our former chapter, quoted a notable passage from our author to the same purpose, wherein he tells us, that all the names of the true God, were ascribed to the sun. Of the same opinion were the Phænicians, Britains of old, and their famed Druids, and perhaps most nations. Yea, so deeply did this fix its roots in the minds of most, that the greatest of the Heathen philosophers can scarcely be freed from an inclination this way.§ Plato tells us, how devout Socrates was in the worship of the sun, and that several times he fell into an extasy, while thus employed.‖ Nor are the famous Indian philosophers one whit more wise. "Not only the Brachmans, "but all the Indians, yea and the famed Appollonius (whom the "Heathens compared to our blessed Lord, most blasphemously "and groundlessly) worshipped the sun."** And we have Appollonius's prayer to the sun, recorded by Philostratus in his life, Lib. 1. *O Summe sol, eo terrarum mitte, quo me profecturum esse cognoscis, & concede, precor, ut viros bonos, agnoscam; improbos vero neq; agnoscam, neq; agnoscar ab illos.*†† Yea after the

* De Relig. Gent. pag. 19.—"But not only were the priests of opinion that "the heaven ought to be worshipped with divine honors, but also the most "famous philosophers, so that not only the Stagyrite but his master before "him, was of that opinion."

† Ibid. pag. 24.—"The Assyrians, says Macrobius, gave the name Adad, "which signifies *one;* to that Being whom they held to be the supreme and "greatest God. Therefore they adore him as the most powerful God, but "they add to him a goddess named Atergates, and ascribe all power to these "two, meaning the sun and the earth."

‡ Ibid. pag. 28.—"That the Persians hold two first principles, to wit, Aro- "mazes as the fountain of good, and Arimanius of evil, betwixt whom they "placed the sun in the middle, and as it were an arbiter."

§ This is fully proven by Dr. Owen, Hornbeck and others, in their books formerly referred to. ‖ See Owen's Theolog. Lib. 3. Cap. 4. pag. 182.

** Hornbeck pag. 31.

†† "O supreme sun, send me to that part of the world, to which you know "I am going, and grant, I pray, that I may know good men, but that I may "neither know bad men, nor be known by them."

light of the glorious gospel had cleared the philosopher's eyes, and made them ashamed of much of their religion, yet even the Platonick philosophers could not quit the thoughts of the sun's being God."*

But not only did some look on the sun as the Supreme God; but (if we may believe Hornbeck, who was at great pains to understand the religions of the world, and particularly of America) several nations in America, particularly the inhabitants of New-France, and they who inhabit about the river Sagadahoc, worship principally the devil or a malignant spirit.†

Thus we have fully demonstrated what we undertook, and hereby quite spoiled the whole story of an universal religion: And our author has been so unhappy, as to lay to our hands many of the arguments, whereby we have disproved his own position. This step being once gained, we shall be more brief in the consideration of the remaining articles: For they all fall with this. If there is a mistake as to this, there can remain nothing sincere in religion. If the *true God* is not *known*, he cannot be *worshipped*, and *rewards* and *punishments* cannot be *expected* from him; nor can we be sensible of, or sorry for any offence done against him. So that we might stop here, as having ruined wholly that cause our author undertook to defend: But we shall consider the rest also.

ARTICLE II.

It was not universally agreed that the One True God is to be worshipped.

How could they agree as to the worshipping of him whom they did not know to be? If it would not frighten the persons concerned, I might here pertinently ask them the question the apostle puts, Rom. x. 14. *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?*

And further, even they who owned one supreme God, many of them entertained such notions of him, as made him unworthy of any worship. He tells us that many of them locked him up in heaven, denying his providence; and one would almost think our author had been of their opinion, while he tells us, "*Recte dictum est olim, quod Æternum Beatumque est nec negotii quicquam habere, ne exhiberi alteri.*"‡ But whatever our author's thoughts

* Owen ubi supra. Lib. 3. Cap. 5. pag. 194.

† Hornbeck de Conver. Gentil. Lib. 1. Cap. 9. pag. 70, 71.

‡ De Relig. Gent. pag. 174.—"It was well said of old, that a being that is eternal and happy, neither has any trouble in itself, nor gives any trouble to another."

were, it is well known, that this opinion prevailed very far, and obtained amongst many, if not most nations, who owned one supreme God besides the sun. And they were further of opinion, that God had committed the whole management of the world to deputies. Our author informs us, that the ancient Heathens divided their gods into *super-celestial*, *celestial*, and *sub-celestial*;† and he tells us, that the chief god, and his companions the super-celestial gods, have not any such concernment in, or regard to the things that are transacted in this world, as to make them take any notice of them; and that the Supreme God has withdrawn himself and the super-celestial gods from the view of mortals, as being of too sublime a nature to be known by them; and that he has deputed the sun, moon, and stars to inspect the world, as the only gods who can be enjoyed by men. "Deum summum vero seipsum supercoelestesq; Deos a conspectu mortalium removisse, quod sublimes adeo essent naturæ, ut nulla eos acies, satis pertingeret, ejus loco non in conspectum solum, sed in fruitionem quandam produxisse deos illos cœlestes, qui a nobis sol, luna, cœlum, &c. vocantur."‡ And the Indian Brachmins seem indeed to be of the same mind, as we know the whole followers of Epicurus were.‖ Yea the inhabitants of Calicut, a kingdom in the East-Indies, are so absurd as to imagine that the devil is God's deputy, to whom the government of the world is committed. And hence they worship the devil principally, (as likewise do the kingdoms of Decum and Narsinga) and "their king has in his oratory the image of the devil with a crown on his head, so very frightful, that the most resolute tremble at the sight of it: the wall is all painted with lesser devils; and in each corner stands one of brass, so well done, that it seems all in flames."** Now if such notions are entertained of God, it is no wonder though he be by many thought not worth the worshipping. The consequences of those apprehensions I cannot better express, than Cicero has done in the very beginning of his first book *de Nat. Deorum*. "Sunt enim philosophi, & fuerunt, qui omnino nullam habere censerent humanarum rerum procurationem deos: Quorum si vera sententia est, quæ potest esse pietas? Quæ sanctitas? Quæ religio? si dii neque possunt nos juvare, nec volunt, nec curant omnino, nec quid agamus animadvertant; nec est quod ab his ad hominum vitam permanare possit: Quod est, quod ullos diis im-

† De Relig. Gent. pag. 170.

‡ Ibid, pag. 171.—"But that the supreme God had withdrawn himself and the other super-celestial gods from the sight of mortals, because they were of so sublime a nature that no human eye could sufficiently reach them; but that he had set up in his place, not only for our knowledge, but fruition, those celestial gods, which are called by us the sun, the moon, the heaven, &c."

‖ Hornbeck, page 40.

** See Calicut, in Great. Geograph. Diction.

mortalibus cultus, honores, preces adhibeamus?"* And much more to the same purpose. Though he speaks of a plurality of gods, yet what he says holds true as to the case in hand: for if we entertain, or if the Gentiles did entertain, as we see some of them did, such notions of their supreme God, as he here speaks of, the same consequences must follow; and it is not credible that any, who thought so, could judge the Supreme God worthy of worship. And indeed we find them no way concerned about it.

In fine not a few of the wiser, who entertained the most just thoughts of God of any, yet being in the dark as to the way of worshipping God, have declared against any worship, at least in practice, till it should by himself be condescended on. Thus it is as to the wiser sort among the Chinese—"De Deo eoque colendo non sunt soliciti. Unum quidem agnoscunt Summum Numen, a quo omnia conservari & regi credunt: Sed, quia quomodo coli velit, ignorare se profitentur; satius autumant cultum ejus omittere, quam in eo designando errare."† And perhaps the best philosophers in other nations were not of a different mind. Thus we see how far they were from being agreed about this article.

ARTICLE III.

The Gentile World were not agreed in judging that Virtue and Piety are the principal parts of the worship of God.

How it should come into our author's head to think that they were agreed, is a little strange, considering how little is to be found among their writers that looks this way. But I suppose the case was this, he had concluded that they were agreed about the *being of One True God*, and to make his religion complete he behoved to have them some way agreed about his *worship* too. But he found them endlessly divided about their solemn worship, and none of it directed to the one true God, but all expressly aimed at other things: wherefore there was no other thing left that could be to his purpose; and therefore he finding that there was somewhat that all the world agreed in, paying some respect to, at least, in words,

* "For there are and have been philosophers, who think that the gods take no care at all of human affairs, and if their opinion be true, what piety can there be? or what sanctity? what religion? if the gods neither can, nor will help us, nor observe what we do; nor is there any thing that can come from them into human life. What reason is there then, why we should offer any worship, honors or prayers to the immortal gods?"

† Hornbeck ubi supra, pag. 47."—"They have no anxiety about God or his worship. They acknowledge indeed one Supreme Deity, by whom they think that all things are preserved and governed; but as they profess that they do not know in what manner he chuses to be worshipped, they think it better to let alone his worship altogether, than to err in determining it."

under the name of virtue; he would needs appropriate this to the True God for his worship, though he has no warrant from the Gentiles to do so. And truly after all, if this was the worship of the True God, or designed as such, whatever agreement there might be in opinion about the worship of the one True God, I think there was none in practice, if not in a total neglect of it: For how few were there, who can have the least pretence to challenge that name amongst all those, whose names have been transmitted to us! How true was the poet Juvenal's observation,

> Rari quippe boni, numero vix sunt totidem quot
> Thebarum portæ, divitis vel ostia Nili.*

But to leave this, and come to the point in hand somewhat more closely,

1. It is evident that the world was very far from being agreed, that there is *One God*: Far more were they divided about the acknowledgment of the True God, and whom they should own as such. It was therefore utterly impossible that they should condescend on this, as a principal part of the worship of God, whom they did not know to have any being.

2. So far were they from looking on virtue as the principal part of the worship of the gods, whom they owned, that the worship of many of their gods, was thought to consist in things that were cross to the plainest dictates of nature's light. Our author acquaints us frequently with the obscenities, the cruelties, and other extravagancies of their worship. The obscenities are too fulsome to be repeated. The furious extravagancies, religious, or rather superstitious fury and madness used in the worship of Bacchus, are known to every one. And for their cruelty, who knows not that human sacrifices were almost universally used? Some offered captives, some offered strangers, some sacrificed their dearest relations and children, and that in the most cruel manner.†

3. We need go no further than our author's book, to learn, that most nations were so far from looking on virtue as any part of the worship due to any of those gods they owned, that they placed it wholly in such other things, as our author, amongst others, has given us a large account of.

4. They, who were most zealous for virtue, were very far from looking on it as a part of the worship of God, or directing it to his glory. I believe our author, were he alive, for all his reading would find it difficult to find one fair testimony to this purpose.

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* "For good men are rare, and scarcely as numerous as the gates of Thebes, or the mouths of the fertile Nile."

† See this fully proven in the learned and excellent Dr. Owen's treatise *de Justitia vindicatrice*, from pag. 66 to 100, by authentic testimonies, with such remarks as may be worth the reading.

They looked not on themselves as debtors to God for their virtue. Hence Cotta, after he has acknowledged that we are indebted to God for our riches and eternal enjoyments, adds; "Virtutem autem nemo unquam acceptam Deo retulit, nimirum recte: Propter virtutem enim laudamur, & in virtute recte gloriamur; quod non contingeret, si id donum a Deo haberemus." Hence a little after, he adds, "Nam quis quod bonus vir esset, gratias diis egit unquam!"*. And much more to the same purpose. They thought that their virtue made them equal to their gods. "Hoc est quod philosophia mihi promittit, ut me parem Deo faciat."† Yea not only so, but they pretended their virtues placed them above their gods. "Est aliquid, quo sapiens antecedat deum, illè naturæ beneficio, non suo, sapiens est."‡ And again, "Deus non vincit sapientem felicitate, etiamsi vincit ætate: Non enim est virtus major, quæ longior."‖ Hence they will not have us so much as to pray to God, either as to virtue or felicity. It is a mean thing to weary the gods. "*Quid votis opus est? facto felicem.*"** And much more to the same purpose.

ARTICLE IV.

It did not universally obtain, that repentance is a sufficient expiation; or, that we must repent for offences done against the true God.

Our author has acknowledged, that there is rarely mention of this amongst the ancients; and we have already, by quotations from him, cleared that the ancient Heathens did not think it a sufficient expiation, and indeed that it was of no great consideration among them, is sufficiently evident from their not taking any notice of it, even when the fairest occasions present themselves. And finally, there can be nothing more certain, than that their repentance could not aim at the offence done to the true God, of whom many of them were utterly ignorant. But what has been said is sufficient to show that it did not universally obtain in any sense, that can turn to any account to the Deists.

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* Cic. de Nat. Deor. p. mihi. 187. Lib. 3.—"For nobody ever confessed that he owed his virtue to God, for we are justly praised on account of our virtue, and we justly boast of it, which would not be the case if we had our virtue as a gift from God.....Nor did any body ever give thanks to the gods because he was a good man."

† Seneca, Epist. 48.—"This is what philosophy promises me, to make me equal to God."

‡ Idem, Epist. 53.—"There is something in which a wise man excels God, that the former is wise by his own benefit, but the latter by that of nature."

‖ Epist. 73.—"God does not exceed a wise man in happiness, though he exceeds him in age, for virtue is not the greater in proportion as it is older."

** Epist. 51.—"What need has he of prayers who is actually happy."

ARTICLE V.

It was not universally agreed, that there are Rewards and Punishments after this life.

1. However many these were that maintained the immortality of the souls of men, it is certain, that there were very many dissentients, who were of a different mind, and that of all sorts of people.

The famed sects among the Indians, which they call *Schaerwaesha*, *Pasenda* and *Tschectea*, if we may believe Hornbeck in his account of them, all deny a future state.*

Nor are the wise Chinese, at least many of them, of a different mind. They are divided into three sects. The first sect of their philosophers are the followers of the famed Confucius; their morals are as refined as perhaps these of the most polite parts of the world, if not more. But as to the soul, they seem to make it a part of God, which at death returns to that first Principle, whence it was broke off. Let us hear Possevinus's account of them. As to this matter he says, they maintain, "Hominis cor esse unam & "eandem rem cum illo primo rerum principio; cumque homo moritur, cor perire prorsus & absumi, superesse tamen ex eo primum "principium, quod vitam ante conferebat." And further, they maintain, "Posse hominem in hac vita summam principii cognoscendi perfectionem adipisci, & meditando pervenire ad maximam "vitæ tranquillitatem, & hoc esse summum bonum, quod donec "obtineat, continuo motu agatur, & de inferno uno in alium conji"ciatur, usque dum contemplando & meditando ad fastigium per"venerit tranquillitatis, quæ in principio illo primo est."† These are the apprehensions of their best moralists.

But there are two other sects, that plainly declare against a future state, and the immortality of the soul, and have no prospect beyond time.‡

Of this same opinion were not only single persons, but many sects of the ancient philosophers, whom Cicero mentions, and concludes his account of them thus—"His sententiis omnibus nihil post "mortem pertinere ad quemquam potest: Pariter enim cum vita

* Hornbeck, pag. 34, ubi supra.

† Hornbeck, pag. 47, 48.—"That the heart of man is one and the same "thing with that first Principle of things, and that when a man dies, his heart "quite perishes and is consumed, yet that the first Principle of it remains, "which formerly gave him life. * * * That a man may in this life "attain to the highest perfection of the principle of knowledge, and arrive "by meditation to the greatest tranquillity of life, and that until he obtain "this, he is agitated by a perpetual motion, and thrown from one hell into "another, till by contemplation and meditation he arrive at the summit of "tranquillity which is in that first Principle."

‡ Ibid. pag. 48, 49.

" sensus amittitur."* And a little after, speaking of the opposition made to Plato's opinion about the immortality of the soul, he says, " Sed plurimi contra (Platonis scil. sententiam) nituntur, animosq; " quasi capite damnatos morte mulctant." And some passages after, speaking of the same opinion, he says, " Catervæ veniunt con- " tradicentium, non solum Epicureorum, quos equidem non despi- " cio, sed nescio quomodo doctissimus quisque contemnit. Acer- " rime autem deliciæ meæ, dico Archias, contra hanc immortalita- " tem disseruit: Is enim tres libros scripsit, qui Lesbiaci vocan- " tur, quod Metylenis sermo habetur: In quibus vult effiecre ani- " imos esse mortales: Stoici autem usuram nobis tanquam corni- " cibus: Diu mansuros aiunt animos, semper negant."†

Nor were they otherwise minded, many of them in Greece. When Socrates vents his opinion of the immortality of the soul that day before he died, Cebes, one of his disciples, who is the conferrer, or one of them at least that maintains the discourse with him, addresses him in these words: " Socrates, I subscribe to the " truth of all you have said. There is only one thing that men " look upon as incredible, viz. what you advanced of the soul: for " almost every body fancies, that when the soul parts from the bo- " dy it is no more, it dies along with it; in the very minute of " parting it vanishes like a vapour or smoke, which flies off and " disperses, and has no existence."‡

100.

Yea, Pliny, Strabo, and many others, declare against the immortality of the soul; nay, Pliny on set purpose disputes against it.‖

And the poets go the same way. It were easy to multiply proofs of this from them. Seneca speaks the mind of many of them, though perhaps not his own. *Trajæ Troa, A.* 1.

> Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil.
> Velocis spatii meta novissima.
> Quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco?
> Quo non mala jacent. Et
> Tempus nos avidum devorat & chaos,

* Cicero, Tusc. Quest. 1. pag. 329.—" From all these opinions, nothing after " death can be interesting to any one; for sensation is lost together with " life."

† " Crowds of opposers come against me, not only of the Epicureans, whom " indeed I do not despise, but I know not how every most learned man despi- " ses them. For my darling, I mean Archais, has disputed very eagerly against " this immortality. He wrote three books, which are called Lesbian, because " the discourse is held at Mytelene, in which he endeavored to prove that the " souls of men are mortal. But the Stoicks only give them a long life like the " crows—they say that souls will live a long time, but they deny that they " will live for ever."

‡ Plato's *Phedon* done into English from M. Dacier's Trans. vol. 2. page 100.

‖ Oweni Theolog. Lib. 1. C. pag. 174.

Mors individua est, noxia corpori,
Nec parcens animæ.*

Persius and all the poets made use of this as an encouragement to give way to themselves, in whatever lust prompted them to.

Indulge genio, carpamus dulcia; nostrum est
Quod vivis, cinis, & manes, & fabula fies.§

If it be said that this is an irony, and that he was not in earnest, it is easy to multiply quotations to this purpose from Horace, Catullus, and most of the poets, which are not capable of any such construction. But I forbear.

And although Cicero was for the immortality of the soul; yet in his first book of *Tusculan Questions*, he plainly derides the whole business of rewards and punishments after this life; as any one who will attentively peruse it may see. I forbear to transcribe the passage; because I behoved to transcribe much to shew the tendency of the discourse. He plainly tells us, that he could be eloquent, if he had a mind to speak against those things; *Disertus esse possum, si contra ista dicerem.*|| The case is plainly this: That person to whom he discourses looks on death as an evil. Cicero tells him that perhaps it is because he fears those punishments after this life, which the vulgar believed; and after he has tartly ridiculed them, he concludes, That had he a mind, he could enlarge against those things, and plainly expose the whole tradition.

But because some talk so much of Plato, Socrates, Cicero, and we get so many quotations from them about the immortality of the soul and a future state; I shall here represent their own opinion somewhat more fully.

As for Socrates, he has not writ any thing that is come to our hands; all the accounts we have of him are from Plato, Xenophon and others, but especially Plato his scholar, who was with him at his death: From him then we shall learn at once, what both his master's opinion and his own were in this matter.

When Socrates is making his apology before his judges, he tells them, "That to fear death, is nothing else, but to believe one's "self to be wise, when they are not; and to fancy that they know "what they do not know. In effect, nobody knows death; no bo- "dy can tell, but it may be the greatest benefit of mankind; and

* "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing, being only the "last stage of our swift course. Do you ask in what place you are to lie af- "ter death? In that place evils do not lie, and greedy time and chance devours "us. Death is a divider, which hurts the body and does not spare the soul."

§ "Indulge your inclination, let us enjoy pleasures; this span of life that "we enjoy is ours, you will soon become ashes, a shade and a fable."

|| Tuscul. Quest. Lib. 1. a little from the beginning. pag. mihi 312.

" yet men are afraid of it, as if they knew certainly that it was the " greatest of evils."* And a little after, speaking of death, " What! should I be afraid of the punishment adjudged by Meli- " tus, a punishment I cannot possitively say whether it is good or " evil?"† And thus he concludes his apology. " But now, it is " true we should all retire to our respective offices, you to live, and " I to die. But whether you or I are going upon the better expe- " dition, it is known to none, but God alone."‡

Again, in that famed discourse on this subject, before his death, after he has produced all the arguments he can for the immortality of the soul, he tells us pretty plainly, how things stood with him. " Convincing the audience of what I advance, is not only my aim; " indeed I shall be infinitely glad that it come to pass; but my " chief scope is to persuade myself of the truth of these things; " for I argue thus, my dear Phedon, and you will find that this " way of arguing is highly useful, (very true to folk that are not " certain and can do no better, and only to these.) If my pro- " positions prove true, it is well done to believe them, and if after " my death they be found false, I will reap that advantage in this " life, that I have been less afflicted by the evils which commonly " accompany it. But I shall not remain long under this ignorance."‖ And when he is near his close, and just about to take the poison, or a little before, having represented his thoughts about rewards and punishments after this life, which are little better than those of the poets, he concludes his account in these words; " No man of " sense can pretend to assure you, that all these things are just as " you have heard. But all thinking men will be positive, that the " state of the soul, and the place of its abode, is absolutely such " as I represent it to be, or at least very near it,"—provided the soul be immortal.

More might be alledged to the same purpose; but this is sufficient to let us see how wavering Plato and his master Socrates were. They talk confidently sometimes; but presently they sink again. Let us next see what Cicero's mind was. He treats this subject on set purpose, in his first book of *Tusculan Questions*, which is wholly spent on this subject. He undertakes to shew and prove against the person whom he instructs, that *death is not an evil*, whether we are dissolved quite or not: and having, as he fancies, proven that death is not an evil, he proceeds, and gives us this account of his undertaking:—" I shall teach you, (speaking of " death) if I can, *si possim*, that it is not only *not an evil*, but a *good*."** But a little after he tells us clearly what we may expect

* Dacier's Plato, Vol. 2. page 28. Socrates' Apology.
† Ibid. page 40. ‡ Ibid. page 47.
‖ Plato's Phedon, page 135, 136.
** Page 325.

from him, when his hearer exhorts him to go on; says he, *Gerum tibi morem, & ea quæ vis, ut potero, explicabo: Nec tamen quasi Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint, & fixa, quæ dixero.: Sed ut homunculus unus e multis probabilia conjectura sequens, ultra enim quo progrediar, quam ut verisimilia videam, non habeo: Certa dicent ii qui & percipi ea posse dicunt, & se sapientes esse profitentur.** And speaking about this opinion, his auditor tells him, how pleasant this is to him. It will be a little pleasant to hear them speak. *A. Me vero delectat: Idque primum ita esse (scil. animos esse immortales:) Deinde etiamsi non sit, mihi tamen perfuaderi velim. M. Quid tibi ergo opera nostra opus est? Num eloquentia Platonem superare possumus? Evolve diligenter ejus eum librum, qui est de animo: Amplius quod desideres nihil erit. A. Feci, mehercule, & quidem sæpius: Sed, nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior: Cum posui librum, & mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogitare, assentio omnis illa elabitur.*† After he has instructed his hearer, his hearer professes his resolution to stand by this opinion; but gets a caution from his instructor, that lets us see how things stand. *A. Nemo me de immortalitate depellet. M.* answers, *Laudo id quidem, etsi nihil nimis oportet confidere; Movemur enim sæpe aliquo acute concluso: Labamus mutamusque sententiam clarioribus etiam in rebus: In his enim est aliqua obscuritas.*‡ And if ye would know what his reason was for insisting so long on the proof of this, he tells us near the close, That it was to banish the contrary suspicion, which was troublesome. Much more might be adduced, but what has been said sufficiently demonstrates how fluctuating and uncertain the best of them were, in reference to this important point.

If any shall say, that though these great men upon some occasions, express themselves with some hesitation, and did insinuate

* Pag. 326.—"*A.* I will obey you, and explain these things that you wish, "as I shall be able. Yet what I am to say will not be certain and fixed like "the oracles of the Pythian Apollo, but I will proceed as one poor man of the "many, following probabilities by conjecture, for I have no where that I can "go further than I see probability. Those will say certain things who say "that certainty can be obtained, and who profess to be wise men."

† Pag. 329.—"*A.* But it pleases me, and this first, that so is the case, (to "wit, that the souls of men are immortal) and then although it should not "be so, yet I wish to be persuaded of it. *M.* What need have you then of "our service? Can we excel Plato in eloquence? Turn over diligently that "book of his, which treats of the soul, you will desire nothing more on the "subject. *A.* Indeed I have done so, and oftener than once, but I know not "how it is, I assent as long as I am reading, but when I have laid down the "book and begin to think with myself of the immortality of souls, all that "assent vanishes."

‡ "None shall drive me from my belief of immortality. *M.* I commend "that indeed, although we ought not to be too confident of any thing, for we are "often determined by something that is acutely concluded; yet afterwards "we give way and change our opinions even in things that are clearer, for "there is some obscurity in those things."

some suspicion that the opposite part of the question might be true, yet upon other occasions they are positive, and that this is as good an evidence of their being firmly persuaded, as the other expressions are of their hesitation. I answer, the consequence is naught. A seeming positiveness upon some occasions, may be the result of a joint influence of a strong desire, that the thing should be true, and some philosophical quirk urged for its support: For as Cicero well observes in the words last quoted, *Movemur sæpe aliquo acute concluso;* and this especially holds true, where there is a strong inclination to believe the thing, as being of obvious advantage to us. Now this may be, where there is no certainty or firm persuasion. I readily own that these great men favored the immortality of the soul: But I positively deny, that they received it with that firmness of assent, that is not only due, but unavoidable, to truths which carry their own evidence along with them. And I moreover aver, that the Deists, in quoting some of these assertions from them, wherein they seem positive, suppressing other expressions, wherein they discover a hesitation, do but abuse the reader's credulity; and give neither a full nor fair account of the judgment of these men.

CHAP. XVI.

Wherein some general considerations are laid down for proving that many of the best things which are to be met with in the Heathens, were not the discoveries of Nature's Light, but came from Tradition.

NOTWITHSTANDING the gross ignorance which overspread the Heathen world, was very great; yet it cannot be denied that there are very many surprising hints of truth to be found, in many of their writings, in reference even to matters of religion.

The Deists take up whatever they meet with of this sort, and confidently give it out, That, all this they discovered by the mere light of nature.

There are who, on the other hand, will scarce allow them to have made any of those discoveries by the *light of nature;* but ascribe whatever hints of truth are to be met with, to *tradition.*— This is said to be the opinion of Eusebius and Scaliger, by Dr. Owen.* And it is of late maintained by Mr. Nicolls, the ingenious author of the *Conference with a Theist.*† For which Mr.

* Theol. Lib. 1. C. 8. Parag. 4.
† Confer. Part 2. page 32, 33, &c.

Becconsal, the author of a late treatise concerning the *Law of Nature*, is much displeased with him, and takes him to task.‡

I design not to make myself a party in this debate, I think that there is somewhat of truth on both sides: But if either think to carry the matter to the utmost, I think also there will be mistakes on both hands. It is too much to say that they discovered nothing in reference to religion by the mere light of nature: And on the other hand it savours of gross ignorance to say that all we meet with in the writings of the ancient sages, was discovered by the light of nature. Nothing is more evident, than that many things have been handed from nation to nation, and from age to age by tradition. This no modest man will or can deny; it has been so clearly made out by many.

What I assert, and shall attempt to prove, is, "That many of the most notable things that we meet with in the Heathen writers, in matters of religion, are not to be looked on as *discoveries* made by the *light of nature*; but as *truths*, whereof they were informed by tradition. And moreover, that when we find them asserting some of those truths, which to us who enjoy the scriptures, and by the scriptures have our reason improven, appear to have a foundation in reason, we are not therefore to conclude, that reason led them to those truths; but rather, that in many cases they had even these from tradition.

In proving this point I shall not proceed by single instances, but shall lay down these general considerations, which at once clear the truth of our asertion, and discover whence these traditions might come, and how easily they might be conveyed to them. Particular instances may be had in great abundance from those who have, of set purpose largely insisted on this subject. Amongst others, Huetius, in his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, has largely discoursed of particular instances of this nature. I think the following observations taken together and duly considered, will put our assertion beyond question with the sober and judicious.

1. It is most certain, that the Jews, however in other regards inconsiderable, which makes it still the more observable, had more full, clear, and certain knowledge of the true God, religion, and matters of worship, than all the world besides. If the Deists please to controvert this proposition we shall debate it with them when they please. And I dare be bold to say, that I shall prove, that there is more true and rational divinity in *one* of the *books of Moses*, than they shall be able to find in *all the Heathen writers*, when they put all that has been said by all of them together.

2. Their neighbors, and more especially the Egyptians, had many fair occasions of obtaining acquaintance with their opinions

‡ Becon. of the Law of Nature, C. 4. page 54, 55, &c.

and practices in matters of religion. Several persons at distant times, went out from the church and settled in distant nations.—Ishmael went out from Abraham's family, and Esau from that of Isaac. Now it cannot be supposed, how wicked soever these persons were, but they would carry out with them some *true notions, opinions and practices*, in *matters of religion*. Nor can it reasonably be denied, that they founded their new government on some of these notices, though variously blended and mixt with corrupt additions and alterations, both in matters of opinion and practice. And it is evident, that these hints, or remainders of truth, in matters of opinion and practice, as they were mixt with these corruptions, would obtain a general and great respect, as being found useful for maintaining order in societies, as being delivered to them by the first founders of their nations, as being commended by their practice, and perhaps established by laws and constitutions. Whence it is not possibly to be supposed that these notices or practices would in an age, or a few ages, wear out.

Again, it is particularly observable in this case, that the church was, for a long tract of time, in a wandering and unsettled state; which obliged them to more of intimacy with the nations that lay near them, than afterwards was necessary, when they settled in a land by themselves apart, and were by divine constitutions, barred from that familiarity.

Moreover, as to the Egyptians, they had much occasion of being particularly acquainted with the Jews' opinions and practices in the matters of God. The Israelites dwelt among them (besides what occasioned converse they had before) about 217 years together. The correspondence was again renewed in Solomon's time, by his matching with the king of Egypt's daughter. Jeremiah, and a great company with him, staid a considerable time in Egypt, and prophesied there to the Jews, who had at that time no separate dwellings, and prophesied concerning Egypt; which, together with the reputation he had got at Jerusalem, by his predictions that were remarkably verified, the notice taken of him by the king of Babylon, and the contests he had with those of his own nation, could not but make him much regarded.

It is further considerable, that there were many things, which may reasonably be supposed to excite an uncommon curiosity in the Egyptians, to understand the religion of the Jews. It is known what a place Joseph long had in Egypt, and how he managed it. Afterwards the people, while under bondage, were scattered through out the land, and the piety of some of them appearing in their sufferings, could not but be taken notice of, as their scattering through the land, gave occasion to the Egyptians to inquire, as to the principles that influenced it. The miraculous appearances of God on behalf of that people in Egypt and its neighborhood, in the wilder-

ness, would have excited the curiosity of a people, much less inquisitive than they were. The reputation of Solomon, his alliance with the crown of Egypt, and his traffick with them, as they gave a new occasion, so could not but spur them on to inquire further into matters of this sort. If to all this you add the general character which writers of all sorts give to the Egyptians, That they were a people more than ordinarily fond about matters of religion, insomuch that our author Herbert observes, that they are said to be the first that taught religion;* and if further it is considered, that the Gentiles, finding the unsatisfactoriness of their own opinions and practices, were very much inclined to change, and adopt the customs, practices and way of every nation in matters of religion, to try if they could find any thing more satisfying than their own;—if, I say, all these are laid together, it cannot be doubted that the neighboring nations, and particularly the Egyptians, learned many things from the Jews in matters of religion.

3. It is observable, that all these things fell out a considerable time before any of those great men appeared or flourished in the world, whose writings are come to us, and contain those truths, concerning the rise whereof we now discourse.

The seven sages, Thales, Solon, Pittacus, Bias, Chilo, Periander, and Cleobulus, who raised the reputation of Greece, did not flourish till about the time of the Babylonish captivity, and long after the dispersion of the Ten Tribes; some do reckon it 125 years.† Socrates and Plato flourished not for near 150 years after these again. Now these are among the first who made any considerable figure for learning of this sort in the Heathen world, whose writings are come to us.

4. All these great men did, for their own improvement, travel into foreign nations, and made it their business to learn their opinions and practices. Particularly we are told of the most considerable of them by Diogenes Laertius and others, That they were very much concerned to know the opinions of the Egyptian priests in matters of religion, and most of what they knew in these matters was taught them by those. This will be denied by none, that is acquainted with the lives of those persons.

5. It is further observable, that in many instances there is such a plain resemblance in their opinions to the scripture accounts of the *origin of the world*, the *deluge*, the *peopling of the earth*, and most other things, as could not be casual; but shews plainly that they were derived thence. This in particular instances by many, particularly Huetius and others, to whom he refers, is so fully demonstrated, that it cannot, without manifest impudence, be denied.

* De Relig. Gent. pag. 8.
† Le Clerk Comput. Hist. pag. 35, 40.

6. What comes yet somewhat nearer to our purpose, it is very observable even as to those truths, which have some foundation in reason, such as these, about the immortality of the souls of men, and their state after death, and the like, that those great men of old proposed them commonly, without offering any proof of them, or any reasons for them. Now it is not credible that, if they had been led to those notices by reason, they would have offered those important truths, without offering reasons of them. This observation we find made, as to its substance, though not on such views, by no less a person than Cicero, who knew as well how matters then stood, to speak modestly, as any now can know. Speaking of the immortality of the soul, and the ancient philosophers' sentiments about it, he says, "*Sed redeo ad antiquos. Rationem illi sententiæ suæ non fere reddebant nisi siquid erat numeris aut descriptionibus explicandum—Platonem ferunt primum de animorum æternitate non solum sensisse idem, quod Pythagoras, sed rationem etiam attulisse.*"*

7. Nor is it less considerable to prove, that the notions, which prevailed about the immortality of the soul, and a future state, (and the like may be said of many others) were not learned from *reason*, but from *tradition;* and that the impression and persuasion of these truths were more generally entertained, and more strongly riveted among the vulgar than among the philosophers. Whole shoals of them, or *Catervæ*, as Cicero above quoted speaks, denied and derided all these things, which the vulgar firmly believed.—This observation I find made by the learned Dr. Owen, "*Cum mundi exitu judicium post hanc vitam exercendum, famam catholicam obtinuit. Eam etiam persuasionem comitata est immortalitatis animarum præsumptio, quæ quamvis rationi etiam innitatur, tamen cum maxime semper apud vulgus, potius quam* σοφους *obtinuit, non nisi traditioni adscribenda est.*"†

8. When these great men of old do give reasons of their opinions, they are such, as any one may see, never led them to these opinions: but having, by tradition received them, they were ashamed to hold them, without being capable to give any reason for what they held, and therefore, they set their wits on the rack to find out what to say for them. And it was but seldom they hit on the

* "But I return to the ancients. They commonly did not give a reason for their opinion, unless when any thing was to be explained by numbers or figures.—They say that Plato was the first who not only was of the same opinion with Pythagoras concerning the immortality of the soul, but who likewise adduced a reason for it."

† "That with the end of the world there was to be a judgment after this life, had a general fame, and a presumption of the immortality of souls accompanied this persuasion, which although it is supported by reason, yet as it has always prevailed most among the vulgar, rather than among philosophers, can only be ascribed to tradition."

true ones. For the most part their reasonings are plainly childish, trifling and sophistical. It were easy to demonstrate this. As to the arguments of Socrates and Plato for the immortality of the soul, they are plain sophisms: and upon what design they were urged, we have heard before, viz. to confirm themselves in an opinion, the belief whereof was accompanied with some advantage.—A learned person says justly, "That Plato endeavors to prove the immortality of the soul by such reasons, as, if they conclude any thing, would conclude it to be a God."* And the same may be said of Cicero and others.

9. It is moreover remarkable, to this purpose, that not only are there many things to be met with in the writings and practices of the ancient writers amongst the Heathens, whereof no colourable reason can be given, nor any account made, otherwise than by ascribing them to ancient and corrupted traditions; but further, that they knew not how to manage or improve those hints, which were this way handed to them. Most of them quite spoil these things in the telling. A few of the more wise, conscious of their own ignorance, yet wanting humility and ingenuity enough to acknowledge it, wrap themselves in clouds, and express themselves darkly, to conceal their own ignorance from the vulgar; and one that understands, would not know whether to laugh or be angry, to see their fond admirers, in later ages, sweating to fetch sublime meanings from words which the writers themselves really understood not.

10. In the last place, we find the ancients themselves, on some occasions, owning, that they owed the first discoveries of these things to tradition. Dacier in her life of Plato, tells us, "That he first instructs them in religion, about which he establishes nothing, without having consulted God; that is, nothing but what is conformable to *true tradition* and *ancient oracles*."† To evince the truth of this, Plato's own words are subjoined, "God, (saith Plato) as we are taught by *ancient tradition*, having in himself the beginning, the middle and end of all things, always goes on in his way, according to his nature, without ever stepping aside; he is followed by *justice*, which never fails to punish the transgressions committed against his law."‡ And a little after, speaking about the punishments of the wicked, he proceeds thus, "They are not limited to the miseries of this life, nor to death itself, from which even good men are not exempt; for these are penalties too light and short, but they are horrible torments." But yet more remarkable to this purpose are his words in his epistles, "*Antiquis vero sacrisq; sermonibus fides semper habenda, qui declarant animum nobis esse immortalem, et judices habere, quorum decre-*

* Dr. Howe's living temple, Part 1. page 122.
† Life of Plato, page 86.
‡ Plato de Ligibus, Lib. 4.

*tis, pro merito præmia et supplicia maxima attribuantur, ut primum quis e corpore decesserit."**

Lay these things together, and as they are in themselves, evident enough: so I think they amount to a full demonstration of the assertion, we have above laid down, for the proof whereof we adduced them; and they do abundantly shew, how inconsiderately every thing met with in ancient writers is put upon the score of *nature's light.*

CHAP. XVII.

Wherein we consider what Herbert's opinion was as to the sufficiency of his Articles, and we offer some reflections, shewing how foolish, absurd and ridiculous the Deist's pretences to their sufficiency are.

WE have now demonstrated that these five articles *did not* universally obtain in the world, and that consequently the Heathen world *had not the means necessary to salvation.*

But should we grant what has been above proved to be false, viz. That these articles *did universally obtain;* yet all is not done, nor is the difficulty so got over; for we are not agreed, that these, though acknowledged, are *alone sufficient.*

We know our author would have us to believe, that they are sufficient. He tells us to this purpose, that when he had found them out, he saw that there was nothing wanting to make a *complete religion. Quam hasce igitur eximias veritates seorsim parassem, disquisivi porro, quid hisce adjecerint, vel quidem adjicere possint sacerdotes, unde certior fidei circa salutem æternam daretur norma, aut vitæ integritas sanctitasq; magis promoveretur, aut communis ubique stabiliretur concordia. Videbam satis alia atque alia hic addi posse, quin et addita fuisse; sed quæ veritates hasce obstruerent, enervarentque potius, quam vim roburque illis conciliarent.*† And indeed our author is so bold as to challenge all the world to shew what can be added to these five articles. *Ut*

* Plato, Epist. 7.—"But credit ought always to be given to ancient and sacred speeches, which declare that our souls are immortal, and that these are judges by whose sentences great rewards and punishments are to be distributed according to merit, as soon as we shall have left the body."

† "When therefore I had got these excellent truths by themselves, I next "inquired what priests had added, or could add to these, whereby they might "be a surer guide of our faith concerning eternal salvation, or integrity and "sanctity of life more promoted, or common concord established every "where. I saw well enough that different things might be added, nay had "been added to them, but such as rather obstructed and enervated these "truths, than gave them any force or strength."

*viderent interea antistites, præsulesq ; per totum orbem diffusi, quid hisce quinq ; Articulis, addere potuerint : Unde vera illa virtus, qua homines Deo similes, consortioque ejus dignos efficit ; vel pietas, puritas sanctitasq : vitæ magis promoveri possint.** And growing still bolder by this imaginary success, he proceeds to inveigh, though more covertly, against the *satisfaction of Christ*, as destructive to *piety*. Of which he gives a most disingenuous account, as commonly he does of all the articles of revealed religion, which he has occasion to mention.

But however confident our author is, of the sufficiency of his five articles in this place ; yet elsewhere he shews he had not over much certainty in his own mind, about this matter.: For some pages after, he says, *Et quidem quinque hosce Articulos bonos, catholicosque esse unusquisq; Procul dubio fatebetur ; ad salutem tamen æternam comparandam non sufficere perhibebunt nonnulli ; cæterum qui ita locutus fuerit, ne ille quidem audax ; nedum sævum temerariumq; affatem (mea sententia) protulerit ; quum nulli satis explorata sint Judicia Divina ; quam etiam ob causam, neque ea sufficere protenus dixerim : attamen magis probabilis mihi videtur eorum opinio, qui æque pie ac leniter de Dei Judiciis statuunt, dum homo, quod in se est, præstat ; neque enim in cujusve potestate est, ut fides sive traditiones quantumvis laxæ (præsertim ubi aliqua ex parte contravertuntur) ad se satis pertingant, neque tandem recta communiq ; ratione quinq ; Articulis nostris addi potest dogma, unde magis pii, sincerique evadunt homines ; aut pax, concordiaq ; publica magis promoveatur.†*— Here our author is more modest.

Thus we have seen what his opinion is ; it now remains that we offer some reflections on it. Many offer themselves : I shall only touch at a few.

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* "—That the priests and bishops, scattered over the whole world, might "see in the mean time, what they could add to these five articls ; or by what "means that true virtue, which renders men like to God, and worthy of his "fellowship, or by which piety, purity and sanctity of life, can be more pro- "moted."

† "And indeed every one will doubtless confess, that these five articles "are good and catholic ; yet some will think they are not sufficient for at- "taining eternal life. But whoever would say so, would be guilty of utter- "ing not only a bold, not to say a cruel and arbitrary sentence, in my opinion, "as the Divine judgments are not sufficiently known to any one, for which "reason likewise, neither would I positively affirm that they were suffi- "cient. Yet the opinion of those seems to be the more probable, who judge "equitably, piously and mildly of the Divine judgments, while a man does "what depends on him ; for it is not in the power of every one, that creeds "or Traditions, however lax, (especially when they are any where contro- "verted) should extend to him ; nor in fine, can any doctrine be added to "our five articles by right and common reason, whereby men may become "more pious and sincere, or peace and public concord may be more promo- "ted."

1. Though the Deists are as desirous as any, to confine religion to a narrow compass, and perhaps it is as much their interest, as it is of any sort of men, that it should consist of few articles; yet, for shame, they cannot make it contain less, than those five articles. They own, and must own all those necessary to salvation, both in belief and practice. It is not possible, they themselves being judges, to reach the ends of religion, if any of them are cut off. Since then we have above proved that these did not universally obtain, it is plain, that all mankind had not *sufficient knowledge of religion*. Thus it is in fact.

But now where shall the blame of this be laid? On themselves? On the priests? Or on God? This last cannot be said.

Well then must these villains of priests, with whom our author and all the succeeding Deists are so angry, bear the blame of it, in that they did not better teach and instruct the people, in the grounds of *sincere religion?* But though our author, and all the Deists, would fain lodge the blame here; yet I am scarce satisfied of the justice of the charge; (though I am willing to own, that they were not for the most part arch-villains) for how shall it be made appear that they themselves knew the grounds of sincere religion? I know our author blames them for not imparting the knowledge of sincere religion to the people; and that he may be sure to shut the door upon them that they may not escape, he adds by way of parenthesis, *licet illis satis cognitam.** But how proves he this, that they knew that *chaste* and *sincere religion* well enough? Might they not be supposed ignorant of it, as well as most of the philosophers, the greatest moralists not excepted? Again, I do not well see what right they had to teach, or how they were obliged. Did the law of nature authorise them to be public teachers? I believe the Deists think not. Was not every man able to shift for himself, and find the way to blessedness? If he was, what need was there to trust these villainous priests? Who was obliged to listen to them? If every man was not able, without the help of some instructor, then if that instructor failed in his duty, as it is certain they did almost perpetually, (nay our author will not allow, nor see I indeed any need of that *almost*) what becomes of the poor vulgar, who, without instruction cannot reach competent knowledge? He is not able to reach it, his instructors fail of their duty; and for any thing I see, the poor man wants, and must always want a sufficient religion, and that without any fault of his.

Well, then, unavoidably, either every man is able to do and know for himself, in matters of religion; or a great many, even most of the poor vulgar, are lost for good and all; and there is no

* Pag. 180 *sub finem.*—"Although it was sufficiently known to them,"

help for it, and that without their fault. If the last be said, our author has lost his point quite; and if this be a fault, he will lay it at the door of Providence, that has not sufficiently provided all men, in the means necessary for their future happiness: If the first be said, then the blame must lie at every man's own door. But methinks our author is not willing of this; for he would always excuse the vulgar, and suppose them so rude and ignorant, that they had not either will, courage, nor ability to step otherwise than they were led. But after all, the fault must be lodged at their doors, or the Deist's whole cause is lost. I confess, any one that was under such impressions of their stupid ignorance, as our author seems to have been, will even think it hard enough to say that every one of them had this ability, to find out a sufficient religion; and I believe, not without ground; though I still think, that they might have known, and done more than they did; but this will do the Deist's cause no service.

2. But further, the Deists must own that natural religion, according to this mould of it at least, did never obtain in purity, without any additions, in any place of the world. Our author confesses, that on this foundation, there was every where a strange superstructure raised. After he has spoken of those articles, he subjoins, "Hæc igitur sincerioris Gentilium religionis partes fuere; reliquæ "vel commentitiæ fabellæ vel archetypæ nugæ, vel scitamenta quæ-"dem prohiberi possunt: inter quæ (damno mortalium) nonnulla "insana, nonnulla etiam impia visebantur."* Now, this being the case, I would gladly know, if our author's five articles are looked upon as of such virtue, that they could hallow all these additions made to them, or at least, so far furnish an antidote for their poison, that persons, who embraced this complex frame of religion, consisting of these five articles, and such additions as in every nation were made to them, might yet reach happiness, or not.

It is pretended that these five articles of natural religion, though contaminated with these additions, (as our author speaks, when he enters upon his discourse, about those orthodox points of religion, "Ritibus, cæremoniæq; contaminabantur, conspurcabanturq,")† are sufficient to lead to happiness, then this is plainly to say, that the religion of every country was good and sufficient, and that every one might be saved by that religion he was bred in.‡ If the defence of this is undertaken, it will be found a pretty hard province, and one will not easily be able to defend, That the complex

* 212.—"These then were the parts of the more pure religion of the Heathens, the others were devised fables, or ancient trifles, or false ornaments, "among which, to the loss of man, some mad and even impious things were "likewise to be seen."

† Pag. 184. Cap. 4. at the close.

‡ Herbert de Veritate, pag. 272.

religion of every country was sufficient, or that the virtue of those articles was such, as to preserve from the hurt of the additions. What if, in the complex frame of most religions of the world, some of our author's fundamental articles are justled out of their own place? Perhaps, while each religion sets up for so many inferior gods, they rob the one supreme God of much of his glory, to adorn these imaginary gods with. It may be, more stress is laid on rites than on virtue, which our author makes the principal part of worship. Perhaps more stress is laid on their rites for expiation, than on repentance. What if the additions made are such, as are utterly inconsistent with a due regard to these articles, or a just improvement of them? What if there are other things yoked in with them in most religions, that are as derogatory to the honor of God, as these can be supposed conducive for its advancement? How can such a horrid medley of things, sound and unsound, orthodox foundations and impious superstructures, be acceptable to God, or useful to man? One half, to wit, our author's *five catholic articles*, is designed to lead men to bliss, pretend the Deists: And the other, to wit, the *rites* and *ceremonies*, are designed to the worst of purposes, by those villains of priests, who aim at cheating the world. Now, how shall such cross designs agree or consist? Or, how can means adapted to so very different, nay, quite opposite ends, be united and hang together? Or, if they are united, how can that religion, which consists of such jarring and incoherent materials, turn to any account? But this opinion is so ridiculous, that I need not insist in disproving of it. No man of sobriety can ever pretend that these articles can be of any use, if each of them is not kept in its own place, and if care is not taken to guard against all additions, which are inconsistent with a due respect to those articles. Some little additions, perhaps one might suppose would do no great hurt; but if there are any, that entrench on the foundations, and put them out of their place, the whole fabric falls, and all is ruined. Now I think it were no hard work to prove, that the additions were such, in every nation, as rendered the whole utterly useless, and insufficient to any of the most considerable ends of religion, either with respect to God or man.

But if it is pretended, that while those five articles are asserted sufficient, it is only meant, that if persons would abandon all those extravagant, destructive and filthy additions, which every where are made to them, and only regard them, then in following these they might attain to life and eternal happiness: If, I say, this is alledged, then I would ask, how shall we distinguish betwixt those articles and others that are interwoven with them, in each country? By what marks shall the necessaries be known from the non-necessaries? The fundamentals from the accessaries? Is every man able, with our author, to dissect and inspect the several religions of the

countries where they live, and separate the necessaries from these that are not so? Our author found this a pretty hard task: What shall poor mean people then think of it? Our author has shown what fair pleas might be made for many of the most pernicious parts of the religions of the nations. Would a poor countryman be able to rid his feet of such fetters? It is utterly impossible that the one half of mankind could distinguish betwixt what was to be rejected, and what was to be retained. In a word, it is evident, that all the world over, things pernicious and destructive were so twisted in with things of another sort, and such fair pleas made for them, that it was utterly impossible for the poor ignorant vulgar to divide the one from the other. Since then these five articles signify nothing, unless they were severed from these other things, which were every where interwoven with them, and most part of mankind were utterly unable to do this, which I doubt no man ever did before our author, it seems evident, that of whatever use they may be to our author, who was so sharp sighted as to spy them out and distinguish them from the other things with which they were mixt; yet they can be of no use to the far greater part of mankind, and consequently the far greater part of the human race, still must be owned destitute of the means that may be justly termed sufficient to lead them to future happiness. These five articles, as in fact they have always been interwoven with other things, were not sufficient to save any; and whatever their force might be, if they had been severed from other things, yet they not being so, before our author did it, and most part of men being utterly incapable of making this distinction, they must be looked on as insufficient to many, at least of mankind, who therefore certainly were destitute of means needful for future happiness, and so left to perish. I know our author pretends that some were able to distinguish, and did make a difference betwixt these articles and the additions: *Verum quinq; articulos supra dictos (utique in corde describuntur) sine ulla hæsitatione accipiebant olim Gentiles procul dubio; de reliquis puto, ambigebant, tum ii præsertim, qui inter illos saltem sapientiores æstimabantur.** How ill-grounded our author's confidence as to the universal acceptance of his five articles is, we have seen above. What he subjoins about the Gentiles distinguishing the additions that were made to them, *from* them, comes not up to the point: For the question is not, Whether some could thus distinguish the one from the other? But, Whether all did, or could? And when he pretends that some of the more discerning did so, what proof does he advance? Nothing but his bold *puto*. This reflec-

* Page 211.—"But doubtless the Heathens formerly received, without any "hesitation, those five articles above mentioned (as being written in their "hearts) of the rest I think that they doubted, and especially those among "them who were reckoned wiser than others."

tion might be further urged, but I shall pass it, and proceed to another.

3. How shall one be satisfied that these five articles are all that were necessary; or that they are sufficient? Are the Deists all agreed about this? No, we have heard one above making *seven* necessary. Nay, our author is not too confident, as we have heard above, when he says, *Quam nulli satis explorata sint judicia divina; quam etiam ob causam, neque eos sufficere protenus dixerim.** We see our author is not very sure about the sufficiency of those articles. But he seems pretty positive that there is no other article discoverable by the common reason of mankind, that can be of any great use, or that is necessary to answer the great ends of religion, the public peace and bettering of mankind. But we see the Deists are not all agreed here; some think more needful. But I have two or three words to say to all this—May no article be allowed necessary that is controverted? So our author insinuates. And Blount in his *Religio Laici*, is positive oftener than once.† Then I would know of the Deists, Have never these articles, any or all of them, been controverted? Have not we already proven, that the *first* article has been controverted, about the *being of one supreme God?* Is not our author's *third* article, viz. "That virtue (as it is discoverable by the light of nature) is the principal part of the worship of God," disputed by Christians? Do not the followers of Spinoza deny repentance to be a duty, and that in compliance with their master, who pretends to demontrate in his *Ethicks*, "That he who repents is twice miserable?"‡ Has not the *fifth* been controverted by many of old? Let any who denies this read Cicero, Lib. 1. *Tusc. Quest.* or Plato's *Phedon*, and they will learn, that it has been controverted by more of the wise men than embraced it. And do not very many of our modern Deists call it in question? Again, have there not been some other articles as universally agreed upon, as little controverted, and perhaps even less than some of these? To give but one instance, Has not the article about the *worship of God*, that he was to be worshipped with some solemn external worship, whom we owned as God, been as much agreed to as any of the rest? Doth it not arise from the common reason of mankind? But I shall wave this.

4. There is another thing that I would know of the Deists, concerning their five articles. Do they think them, as they are pro-

* Vid. pag. 47.—"As the divine judgments are not sufficiently known to any "one, for which reason likewise, neither would I positively affirm that they "were sufficient."

† Compare pag. 3 and 4.

‡ Spin. Ethicks, pag. 4. Prop. 54. *Pœnitentia virtus non est, sive ex ratione non oritur, quem facti pœnitet, bis miser, seu impotens est.*—"Penitence is not a "virtue, nor arises from reason, for he who repents of what he has done, is "twice miserable, or weak."

posed, sufficient? Or must they not be well explained? If as they are proposed, I would gladly see the man that can have the face to maintain, what is not only untrue, but ridiculous. Will, for instance, the owning *virtue* to be the principal part of the worship of God, signify any thing to the world, while they know not, and are not agreed what is virtue and what is vice? Is not this to mock the world, to propose general articles, and tell the world is agreed about them, while yet one half is not agreed what is the signification of these general words? Is not this a plain cheat? It is true, Blount, who has copied all from our author, as the present Deists do from him, tells us that these articles must be well explained. "Neither "can I, (says he) imagine so much as one article more in common "reason, that could make man better, or more pious, when the "foresaid were rightly explicated and observed."* But now are not these articles sufficient unless rightly explicated? No, he dares not say it. Well, was the world agreed about this right explication of them? Who ever did rightly explain them? Point us to the person who did it, either for himself or others? Was every body able to do it for himself? If not, then I fear the world wanted still a sufficient religion, after all the pains taken to provide them in one. And further, what is the meaning of author's wording the third article, "That virtue is the principal part of the worship of God?" This may be true, though it be not the *only part*. Well, though it is the *principal part*, may there not be *another part necessary?* Though perhaps the head of a man is the principal part, yet there are some other parts necessary. Was not the world as much agreed that there should be another part, as that this *was* a part of the worship of God? I believe it is easy to prove the world was more agreed as to the *first* than the *last*. Why then must this be overlooked? I believe I could guess pretty nearly—he was afraid to do it, because he saw that he would presently be confounded with the differences about the way of worship, and that he would never be able to maintain that *reason* was sufficient to direct us to the *solemn worship of God;* and that, if he should assert it, he would have not only Christians to dispute the point with him, but Heathens. But lest it should be thought that what is alleged of the Heathens' looking on reason as incompetent for this, is groundless, I shall only copy you a little of Socrates' and Alcibiades' discourse about worship, out of Plato, or rather remind the reader of what we quoted from him before. Socrates meets Alcibiades going to the temple to pray, and dissuades him from it, because he knew not how to do it, till one should come and teach him. Socrates says, "It is alto-"gether necessary you should wait for some person to teach you "how you ought to behave yourself, both towards the gods and

* Religio Laici. pag. 73.

" men." Alcibiades replies, " And when will that time come, So-
" crates? And who is he that will instruct me? With what plea-
" sure should I look on him!" Whereupon Socrates bids him hope
" that God will do it, and will take the mist off his soul, and cure
" him of that darkness, that hinders him from distinguishing betwixt
" good and evil." Whereupon Alcibiades says, " I think I must
" defer my sacrifices to that time." To which Socrates returns,
" You have reason: It it is more safe to do so, than run a great
" risk."* And the same Plato elsewhere tells us, " That this in-
" structer must be a person somewhat more than human." Nor was Jambilichus, a famous Platonick philosopher, who lived in the fourth century, otherwise minded, whose words, as I find them translated by Mr. Ferguson, run thus: " It is not easy to know
" what God will be pleased pleased with, unless we be either im-
" mediately instructed by God ourselves, or taught by some per-
" son whom God hath conversed with, or arrived at the know-
" ledge of it by some divine means or other."†

5. There is another thing that I would gladly be informed of, and that is, whether every sort of knowledge of them be sufficient? Or, is a clear, certain and firm persuasion needful? If the first, How can a dark, uncertain and wavering knowledge have that influence upon practice, and that vigor to excite to a compliance with them, which is absolutely needful in order to attain the benefit of them? If the latter, How will our author prove, that it was any where to be met with, as to them all, in the Heathen world? Or, how will he make it appear, that it is attainable by mere reason? Methinks our author's words above noted, as to the fifth article, seem not to import any great certainty. This might be urged to that degree that it would be very hard, nay, I fear not to say so, impossible, for the Deists to rid their feet of it.

6. I would further know, Will these five articles be sufficient to this end, to lead to *eternal happiness*, whether men direct to it or not? Is not the *intention* of some consideration in moral actions? And what if I should deny that the religion of Heathens was directed to this end, the obtaining of future happiness? If I should, I know some very great men are of my mind. I shall name two, the one a Christian, the other a Heathen. The *first* the famous Samuel Puffendorff, counsellor of state to the late king of Sweden. His words are worthy to be here transcribed, though somewhat long. " Now to look back to the first beginnings of things, we find,
" that before the nativity of our Saviour, the inhabitants of the whole
" universe, except the Jews, lived in gross ignorance as to spiritu-

* M. Dacier's Plato Englished, Vol. 1. page 249, 250. Second Alcibiad. Or, Of Prayer.

† Lib. 4. de Lege Civ. by Dr. Leslie against the Jews, pag. 386. Ferg. Enquir. into moral virtue, &c. pag. 177. Jambili. de Vita. Pythag. Cap. 28.

" al affairs. For what was commonly taught concerning the gods, " was for the most part involved in fables, and most extravagant " absurdities. It is true, some of the learned among them have " pretended to give some rational account concerning the nature " of the gods and the soul; but all this in so imperfect and dubi- " ous a manner, that they themselves remained very uncertain in " the whole matter. They agreed almost all of them in this point, " that mankind ought to apply themselves to the practice of virtue, " but they did not propose any other fruits, but the honor and bene- " fits, which thence did accrue to civil society. For what the po- " ets did give out concerning the rewards of virtue and the punish- " ments of vice after death, was by these, who pretended to be " the wisest among them, looked upon as fables, invented to terri- " fy and keep in awe the common people. The rest of the people " lived at random, and what the Heathens called religion, did not " contain any doctrine or certain articles concerning the knowledge " of divine matters. But the greatest part of their religious " worship consisted in sacrifices and ceremonies, which tended " more to sports and voluptuousness, than to the contemplation of " divine things. Wherefore the Heathen religion did neither edi- " fy in this life, nor afford any hopes or comfort at the time of " death."* Thus far he. Now methinks here is a quite differ- ent account of the Heathen world from that which our author gives us, and that given by no churchman, but a statesman; and one as learned as our author too, and that both in *history* and the *law of nature*, as his works evince; and in my opinion it is the juster of the two accounts. The *second* is Varro, quoted by our author, who divides the religion of the Heathens into three sorts, *Primum genus appellat;* Mythicon *secundum;* Civile *tertium* Physicum.† The first is that of the poets, which is altogether *fabulous*. The other which he calls *natural*, is that of the philosophers, which is wholly employed about the nature of the gods. And Varro ex- pressly says, it was not meet for, nor of any use to the vulgar. The third sort was what he calls *civil*, which was wholly calculated for human society, and its support; and to this all the public wor- ship belonged, if we may believe Varro in the passage we now speak of. When he has opened the nature of each of them, he concludes with an account of the design of them. " *Prima theo-* " *logia maxime accommodata est ad theatrum: secunda scil, na-* " *turalis ad mundum: Tertia ad urbem.*"‡ No word here of eter- nal life, as the design of any of them. The passage itself fully ex- cludes it, and had it not been too long, had been worthy to be tran- scribed.

* Introduct. Hist. of Europe, pag. 357. Ch. 12. Par. 2.

† See it also in August. de Civit. Dei, Lib. 6. Cap. 5.

‡ " The first theology is fittest for the theatre, the second, to wit, the natu- " ral, for the world, and the third for the city."

7. To draw to a conclusion, Was it enough to the Heathens that these things were sufficient, although they did not know them to be so? Or was it needful that they should know them to be so? If the last be said, how could they be sure about that, even the vulgar sort of them, which our author, after all his application to this controversy, could not win to be sure of? If the first be said, I would ask any Deist, Was not the end of natural religion fixed, and were they not certain? Or might they not, at least, be fixed and certain about it? If it was not, how could they use or chuse means, or direct them to an end which was not fixed, and they were not certain about? If it was, then with what courage could they use means with respect to an end and means, in the use of which they had so many difficulties to grapple with; yet they could not be sure that they were sufficient by the least use of them to gain the end? Was it enough of encouragement, that they might use them at all adventures, not knowing whether they were, in themselves, sufficient to reach the mark or not? Methinks our author is very defective as to motives to excite to virtue.

CHAP. XVIII.

Containing an answer to some of the Deists' principal arguments for the sufficiency of Natural Religion.

WE have now considered what the Deists plead from *universal consent;* and have sufficiently cleared that it is not by them proven, that the world was *agreed* as to *these articles;* that indeed the world did not agree about them; that even they who owned them, were led to this acknowledgement, at least of some of them, rather by *tradition* than *nature's light;* and that though they had acknowledged them, they are not *sufficient.* It now remains that we consider those arguments, wherein they conceive the great strength of their cause to lie.

The first argument, which indeed is the strongest the Deists can pretend unto, is thus proposed by their admired Herbert: "*Et quidem quum media ad victum, vestitumque heic commoda* "*suppeditant cunctis natura sive Providentia rerum communis,* "*suspicari non potui, eundum Deum, sive ex natura, sive ex gra-* "*tia, in suppeditandis ad beatiorem hoc nostro statum, mediis,* "*ulli hominum deesse posse vel velle, adeo ut licet mediis illis* "*parum recte, vel feliciter usi sint Gentiles, haud ita tamen per* "*Deum optimum maximum steterit, quo minus salvi fierent.*"*

* For the translation, see note at bottom of page 228 of this book.

To the same purpose speaks Blount in his *Religio Laici*, and *A. W.* in his letter to him in the *Oracles of Reason*, of whom afterwards. The force of all that is here pleaded will best appear, if it is put into a clear argument, and I shall be sure not to wrong it in the proposal. The argument runs thus:

The goodness of God makes it necessary that all men be provided in the means necessary for future bliss.

But all men are provided with no other means of attaining future bliss save nature's light.

Therefore no other means are necessary for all men save the light of nature.

The minor or second proposition needs not to be proven, since it is owned by those who maintain revelation, that it is not given to all men, and therefore that many have indeed no other light to guide them, save that of nature, in matters of religion, or in any of their other concerns.

The first proposition, "That the goodness of God makes it necessary that all men be provided in the means of attaining future blessedness," is that which they are concerned to prove. And the strength of what they urge for proof of it amounts in short to this:

The goodness and wisdom of God seem to render it necessary that all creatures, but more especially the rational, be provided in all means necessary to obtain those ends they were made capable of, and obliged to pursue.

But men are made capable of, and obliged to pursue eternal happiness and felicity.

Therefore the goodness and wisdom of God make it necessary that all men should be provided in the means necessary to obtain future and eternal bliss.

Here we have the strength of their cause, and we shall therefore consider this argument the more seriously, because some seem to be taken with it, and look upon it as having much force. Before I offer any direct answer, I shall make some general reflections on it. The first process is only designed to make way for this last, which indeed is the argument, and contains the force of what is pleaded by the Deists.

Now concerning this argument, we offer the few following reflections, which will not a little weaken its credit, and make it look suspicious like.

1. That proposition whereon its whole weight leans, viz. "That the goodness of God obliges him to provide his creatures in the means necessary for attaining their ends," is one of that sort, about which we may, in particular cases and applications of it, be as easily mistaken, and are as little *in tuto*,* to be positive in our

* "In safety."

determination, as any where else. For, although we are surer of nothing than that *God is good*, and *must act congruously to his goodness*, in general; yet when we come to make particular inferences, and determine what, in point of goodness he is obliged to do, we are upon very slippery ground, especially if we have not, as in this case it is, the means to guide us. For, besides that goodness is free in its effects, divine and not affixed to such stated rules knowable by us, as justice is, goodness, in its actings, is under the conduct and management of all-comprehending wisdom, which in every case wherein God is to act, considers that a being not only infinitely good is to act, but also one who is infinitely wise, holy, just and righteous; and therefore all-comprehending wisdom takes under consideration, or rather has in its view the concernment of all those properties of the divine nature; and withall, all the circumstances belonging to each particular case, and takes care that the case, in all its circumstances, be so managed, that not one of the divine perfections shine to the eclipsing of another; but that all of them appear with a suitable lustre. Now, it is certain that we, who are of so narrow understandings, and so many other ways incapacitated to judge of the ways of God, cannot reach either the different interests of the divine properties, and judge, in a particular circumstantiated case, what befits a God, who is at once good, holy, wise and righteous; nor can we reach all that infinite variety of circumstances, which lying open to the all-comprehending view of infinite and consummate wisdom, may make it appear quite otherwise to him than to us. Hence, in fact, we see that an almost infinite number of things fall out in the government of the world, which we know not how to reconcile to divine goodness: and as many are left undone, which we would be apt to think infinite goodness would make necessary to be done. This consideration, if well weighed, would make men very sparing in determining any thing necessary to be done, in respect of divine goodness, which either it is evident he has not done, or of which we are not sure that he has done, which perhaps we shall make appear, if it is not from what has been already said, to be the case.

2. I observe, as to what is advanced, "That man is made capable of, and obliged in duty to pursue eternal felicity," that although from revelation we know this to be true as to man in his original constitution, and by the remaining desires of it we may guess that possibly it was so; yet, if we set aside divine revelation, and consider man in his present state, concerning which the question betwixt us and the Deists proceeds, we cannot by the help of nature's light only, with any certainty conclude, "that man is capable of and obliged to pursue eternal felicity." We

see the man dissolved by death. Nature's light knows nothing of a resurrection. Without a resurrection there is nothing can be said for man's eternal felicity. Though we grant his soul to have no principle of corruption in itself, and so to be in this sense immortal; yet this cannot secure us against the fears of annihilation. And the gusts and desires of felicity, from which we may be induced to suspect some such state designed for man, being apparently frustrated, by the dissolution of man, to which they have a respect, cannot but make men, who have no more save nature's light, hesitate mightily about this assertion; since it is plain, that the desires we find in ourseles of felicity, do respect the whole man; and the aversion we have to dissolution respects our natures in their present entire frame and constitution. Besides, it is of moment, that if man, now entire, is at a loss how to judge of the ends for which he was made, much more must he be supposed in a strait how to judge and determine for what ends any particular part belonging to his constituion was designed, after the dissolution of the whole in a separate state, that is, in all its concernments, so much hid from and unknown to us. Further, although undoubtedly as long as we are, it is our duty to make it our chief aim to please God, and seek for felicity only in him; yet since, not only our beings, but that felicity which may be supposed attainable by us, are emanations from sovereign, free and undeserved bounty, without some intimation from him, in way of promise, we can draw no sure conclusion as to its continuance, were we innocent, much less can we being guilty.

3. This argument concludes nothing in favour of the Deists; whatever it may say for the Heathens. For were it granted, that God is obliged to provide for all men the means necessary to future felicity; and that he has not given all men other means; yet it cannot be hence inferred, that he has given no other means to some. In this case, if all this were granted, which yet we have not done, it would follow, that they, who have no other means, must look on these as sufficient, and that they really are so: But still God is left at liberty to prescribe other duties to any particular persons, or nations, by *revelation;* and if this revelation come, they are obliged, to whom it comes, to attend, receive and obey it. Now, if the *scriptures* be a *divine revelation*, attended with sufficient evidence, which the Deists must either allow, or overthrow what it pleads for itself; they are everlastingly undone, unless they receive it, and comply with it.

4. I observe, that the conclusion of this argument, which it aims at the establishment of, viz. *That God in point of goodness, must provide all men in the means necessary to future felicity, and consequently has done it,* is exceedingly prejudiced, by its lying cross to the plain sense and experience of the world in all ages, as

has been plainly made appear. Now in this case, where the principles or premises are dark, and such whereabout we may easily be mistaken, which is the case here, as appears by the two first reflections; and the conclusion carries a manifest contradiction to what we must certainly know, and have experience of; in this case we have reason to conclude, that there lies certainly a fallacy or mistake in one or other of the principles; though we cannot discover presently where it precisely is. And therefore, although men could not easily except against the premises or principles, whence it is deduced; yet they would think themselves sufficiently warranted, if not plainly to reject, yet to be shy in admitting the conclusion: forasmuch as the admitting the conclusion will oblige them to deny what their own sense and experience, as well as that of the world, assures them about: Whereas, it is much more reasonable to think and determine that there lies some fallacy in the principles, though it may be they are not in case to detect it. No man, by the arguments against motion, can be brought to question its being, much less its possibility; yet there are thousands, even no mean scholars, who cannot answer the arguments that conclude against it. But in very deed, this argument is not so strong, as to need so much nicety.

Having thus far weakened it by these general reflections, I shall next lay down and clear some propositions that will lay a foundation for a close answer to it.

1. All men at present, are involved in guilt, have corrupt inclinations, and are under an inability to yield perfect obedience to the law, they are subjected to. That all in more or less, are guilty of sin, cannot be well denied, and we have heard the *Oracles of Reason* owning, "That all do err sometimes, even the best, in their actions." That men are corrupt, or have corrupt inclinations, has been above sufficiently evinced. That all are under some sort of inability to yield perfect obedience, is attested by the experience of all, and besides, is an inevitable consequent of the former: for it is not possible to suppose one possessed of corrupt inclinations, and yet able to yield perfect obedience. Nor need we stand to prove what the Deists own. For A. W. in his Letter to Charles Blount, speaking of the law of nature says, "I do not say that we are able perfectly to obey it." I dispute not now of what sort this inability is, whether only moral, such as arises from the will's inclination to evil; or natural, which imports such an inability as supposes the nature of the faculties vitiated, though the faculties are not wanting. The condemnings of our own hearts, and the nature of the moral government we are under, sufficiently assures us, it is such as does not excuse from fault; and further we are not concerned: though, after all, I do not understand how the will can be fixed in an inclination to evil, or aversion from good,

unless the nature of the will be supposed affected with some indisposition, though the faculty is not removed. But of this only by the bye. It is enough to our present purpose, that man is guilty, corrupt, and thence unable. He that will deny this, must suppose us blind and senseless.

2. If reason can ascertain us of any thing, it does of this, that things were not originally thus with man, or that man, when he was first made, was not thus guilty, corrupt or impotent. Nor will any dare to say, that at first he was guilty. And to assert him either corrupt or impotent, overthrows all the just notions we have of the Deity. How can it be supposed, that infinite wisdom could enact laws, which were not only not likely to take effect, but really could not possibly be obeyed by men subjected to them! How can we suppose infinite goodness to establish laws under a penalty, and deny the powers which were indispensably requisite to obey them, and without which it was not possible to evite the penalty! How can we suppose infinite righteousness and holiness to consent to a constitution of this kind! How is it conceivable, that a God, wise, just and good, should originally have implanted in our natures inclinations contrary to those laws, that were the transcript of, and bore the impress of all these perfections! Or, how can we once dream that he implanted inclinations, which it was criminal to satisfy or comply with! For my part, I see not what can be reasonably said in answer to this.

3. It is further evident, that man could not have fallen into this state he now is in, or from that wherein he was made, but by his own default. If this be denied, I inquire, where shall the blame be laid? Will they lay it at God's door? Besides, that this is blasphemy, it is further evident, that all the former absurdities will recur: For it is to no purpose to give powers, and take them away again without any default in the person who loses them, the obligation to obedience or suffering upon disobedience still continuing.—Nor can it be laid upon any other, because if man is without his own fault, robbed of the powers necessary to obey, the obligation to obedience cannot be righteously continued. Nor was it consistent with the divine wisdom, to have obliged men to obedience, under a penalty, while there was a possibility of man's losing the power to obey, without a fault on his own part. It remains then, that man has by his own fault, forfeited what he has in this part lost. And to this our own conscience, and the consciences of all sinners, who are sensible of sin, consent, that God is free and we guilty.

4. Hereon it inevitably follows, that man, is at present in a corrupt, sinful, and impotent state, into which by his own default, he has fallen. Nor see I how it is possible to avoid this, which only sums up the three preceding assertions. The first whereof is undeniable with sober and ingenuous persons, being attested by the

favor of the sufferer, and averse from the author of the torment, has a far more easy task, even though he is of weaker abilities, and employed in defence of the worst cause, than he who undertakes to defend such actions. The reason of this is obvious; all that makes to his purpose, who designs to expose the action as cruel, lies open in its nature and horror to the thoughts of the most inconsiderate; and if to this he only sets off the representation with a little art, so as to touch the affections, which in this case is easily done, he has carried his point; the judgment is not only deceived, but the affections are so deeply engaged in the quarrel, as to preclude the light of the most nervous and valid defence imaginable. Whereas on the other hand, all things are quite otherwise. The circumstances inducing to such actions, are usually deep, and not so easily discernible, and therefore not to be found out, without much consideration; and when they are found out, they are not easily collected, laid together, and ranged in that order, which is necessary to set the atrocity of the crime in a due light, especially where the persons who are to judge are weak and biassed. Besides, the evil of those crimes, being for most part more spiritual, makes not so strong an impression on the affections. And this consideration holds more especially true, where the question is concerning the judgments of God, which proceed upon that comprehensive view, which infinite wisdom has of all circumstances, that accent the evil, aggravate the fault, and enhance the guilt of sins committed against him; many of which circumstances no mortal penetration can reach. And further, this more particularly holds true, where it is not God himself, but man that pleads on behalf of the actings of God. It is very observable to this purpose, that historians of all nations almost condescend upon instances, wherein the sight of severe, but just punishment of atrocious offenders has not only excited the compassion of the populace to the sufferers, but enraged them against the judges. Even they who would have been ready to reclaim against the partiality and negligence of the judge, if the crimes had been passed without just punishment, when they see the punishment inflicted, through a fond sort of compassion to the sufferers, complain of the cruelty of the judge, laying aside all thoughts of the atrocity of the crime.

3. Where they, who make it their business to traduce such actions, as hard and cruel, and they also, whom they labor to persuade of this, are connected by alliance, or common interest with the sufferers, are themselves in the same condemnation, or, upon the same and such like accounts, obnoxious to that justice, which adjudges those sufferers to these torments, which they study to represent as cruel and barbarous, it is no wonder to see that the representation makes such deep impressions, and rivets such a persuasion, that the punishments are cruel and hard, as may not only bias a little

against any defence that can be made for the judge, but may even make them refuse to admit of any apology, or condescend so far as to give any that can be made a fair hearing. But all unbiassed persons must allow, that such can never be admitted judges competent, as to what is just or unjust, hard or otherwise; the case being, in effect, their own, and they by this means being made both judge and party.

4. However great, terrible and heavy any punishment that God is supposed to inflict, may in its own nature appear, or how great soever the number of the sufferers may be, yet we can never, from the severity of the punishment, or the number of the sufferers, disprove its justice, unless we can make it appear, that no circumstances, which can possibly fall under the reach of infinite wisdom, can render such severity towards so many persons, worthy of him. Now, however easy this undertaking may appear to persons less considerate, it will have a far other aspect to such as impartially ponder, that all men are manifestly partial in favor of those of their own race, and in a case which is, or may be their own, and have no suitable apprehensions of the concernments of the divine glory in it, or no due regard for them: Besides, such is their shallowness, that they can neither have under view many important circumstances, that are fully exposed to all comprehending wisdom, nor can they fully understand the weight, even of these circumstances, that they either do, or may, in some measure know.

5. Every man who is wise and just, when either he hears of, or sees any punishment that appears very severe and terrible, must suspend his judgment as to the hardship of it, till the author of it is fully heard as to the inducements, and neither ought he to deny what his eyes see, his ears hear, or he is otherwise informed of, upon sufficient evidences. He is neither to question the matter of fact, nor condemn the judge of cruelty, because of the seeming severity of the punishment. This is a piece of common justice, which every judge, even amongst men, may reasonably claim from his fellow creatures, although his actions and the reasons of them, cannot be supposed to lie so far out of their ken, as those of the divine judgments: Much more is it reasonable for men to pay this deference to God, considering how unable the most elevated capacities are to penetrate into all the reasons, which an infinitely wise God may have under view; and there is the more reason for this, since man also is naturally so very apt to be partial in his own favor, and to fail of giving a due regard in his thoughts unto the concernments of divine glory.

These observations, as they are in themselves unquestionably true, so they do fully lay open the causes of that general acceptance, which this plea of the Deists has obtained with less attentive minds; and how little weight is to be laid upon them. In a word,

is obliged to give man eternal happiness for his obedience? 2. Since none of them are o be punished beyond the just demerit of their sins, may not God righteously inflict that punishment, whatever it is, that their sins, in strict justice, deserve, though he had never proposed a reward, which reason can never prove our best actions worthy of, even though we had continued innocent? But, 3. That man, in his present case, has lost the knowledge of eternal felicity, and the means of attaining it, and is unable to attain it, is owing not to any defect of bounty and goodness of God, much less of justice; but only unto the sin of man, as has been demonstrated in our answer to the foregoing argument, by reasons drawn from nature's light. Notwithstanding of which; it must still be owned, that nature's light cannot acquaint us how man fell into his present lamentable condition, as we have above made appear.

8. But is it not safer and more modest, may some say, to suppose, that God of his great mercy did, by revelation, communicate to some of the best of the Heathens, who improved nature's light to the greatest advantage, what was further necessary to their salvation, or, at least to bring them into a state of happiness, of somewhat inferior degree to that which is prepared for Christians. I know many Christian writers of old and of late have multiplied hypothesis of this kind: Some have supposed apparitions of angels, saints, nay damned souls and devils; of which stories I am told that Collius discourses at large, in the second book of his treatise *De Animabus Paganorum.** Some tell us, "That to such of them as lived virtuously, God always, at some time or other, sent some man or angel savingly to illuminate them."† So the Areopagites. Some tell us of Christ's preaching to them in purgatory; so Clemens Alexandrinus; some will have them instructed by the Sibylls, as the same author says elsewhere; some talk of their commerce with the Jews, in which way no doubt some of them came to saving acquaintance with God; others say, that upon their worthy improvement of their *naturals*, God might and did reveal Christ to them and *spirituals*, because *habenti dabitur*.‡ So Arminius. And of this Herbert frequently intimates his approbation, but with an evident contradiction to, and subversion of, his whole story about the sufficiency of natural religion. Besides, the bottom of this is a rotten Pelagian supposition of a merit in their good works: and that *habenti dabitur*, spoken of in another case, after all the pains some are to stretch it, will not reach this case; and after all we are left in the dark, as to the way wherein they will have supernaturals communicated to them. The late ingenious author of the *Conference with a Theist*, supposes a place provided for the sober

* De cœlesti Hierar. Ch. 9. † Strom. Lib. 6.
‡ "To him that hath shall be given."

Pagans in another world, wherein they shall enjoy a considerable happiness,* and wrests what our Lord says to his disciples, John xiv. 3. of the *many mansions that are in his Father's house*, to favor his notion. But now as to all these suppositions and others of the same alloy, however their authors may please themselves in them, I think they are to be rejected. Nor is this from any defect of charity to the Heathens, but because they are supported by no foundation, either in scripture or reason. However, some of them are possible, yet generally speaking, none of them have the countenance so much as of a probable argument. The scripture proof, adduced by that last mentioned ingenious author, has no weight in it. There is no countenance given to it from the context, nor any other place of scripture, and I cannot approve of his boldness in stretching our Lord's words beyond what his scope requires. But these things have been considered at length by others, whom the reader may consult.† All these suppositions are at best but ingenious fancies, wherewith their authors may please themselves, but can never satisfy others. Nor can they be of any advantage to the Heathens. I think I have made it sufficiently appear in the foregoing discourse, that they wanted *means sufficient* to lead them to *salvation*, and so had no ground to support a reasonable hope of it. It is granted, even by those whose peculiar hypothesis in divinity lead them to be most favorable to the Heathens, that *they had no federal certainty of salvation*; and for any *uncovenanted mercy*, of which some talk, I know nothing about it. Scripture is silent. Reason can determine nothing in it; and therefore disputes about it are to be waved. It is unwarrantable curiosity for men to pry into the secrets of God; *things that are revealed do belong to us*. Where revelation stops we are to stop. Even Herbert himself dare carry the matter no further than a *may be*; and what may be, may not be.

CHAP. XIX.

Wherein Herbert's Reasons for publishing his Books in Defence of Deism are examined and found weak.

THE learned Herbert, toward the close of his book *De Religione Laici*, to justify the publication of his thoughts, as to a *catholic religion*, common to all mankind, mentions seven supposed advantages of this opinion, or so many pleas for Deism. What weight there is in them, we shall now consider.

He introduces himself with a protestation that he published not his book with any ill design against Christianity, which he

* Nicol. Confer. Part 2, pag. 80.

† See Anth. Tuckney, Appendix to his Sermon on Acts iv. 12.

honors *with the title of optima religio* : But on the contrary says, That *he aimed* at establishing it, and intended to strengthen true faith, " *Denique me animo adeo non optimæ religioni infenso,* " *aut a vera fide alieno tractatum hunc edidisse testor; ut utram-* " *que statuminare in animo habuerim,*"* &c.

I shall not dive into his designs ; for which he has long ago accounted unto the only competent Judge. But of the design, or rather tendency of his books, we may safely judge. And as to this I say, that if it is granted, that the scriptures are the only standard of the Christian religion, which cannot modestly be denied ; I shall upon this supposition undertake to maintain against any who will defend him, That his books aim at the utter subversion of the Christian religion, that his principles overthrow entirely the authority of the scriptures, and are not only inconsistent with, but destructive to the essentials of Christianity. And I further add, that this is every where so obvious in his writings, that it will require a strange stretch of charity, to believe our author could be ignorant of it.

Our author having told us what was not his design, proceeds next to condescend upon the reasons inducing him to assert this common religion. And

1. He tells us that he maintains this common religion, " *Quod* " *providentiam divinam,*" &c. Because it " vindicates the uni- " versal Providence of God, God's principal attribute, whose dig- " nity can never be sufficiently supported. Neither do any par- " ticular religion, or faith (to give you our author's own words, " *Fides quantumvis laxa*) maintain this, so as to represent God's " care of all mankind, in providing for them such common prin- " ciples as those contained in our catholic truths."

Here our author teaches two things, and I think them both false. (1.) He tells us, " That his catholic religion vindicates the " universal providence of God, or serves to maintain its honor." This I think false. The foundation of it we have proved to be not only precarious, but false. For we have cleared, that his five articles did not universally obtain ; and further, that if they had, they were not sufficient to happiness. Yea, our author himself, after he has told us, that the universal providence of God cannot be maintained, unless we suppose him to have provided all his creatures, in the means necessary for obtaining their happiness, next informs us that he has provided man in no other means, save these five articles.† And he further tells us in his words above quoted, that he dare not positively say they are sufficient, nor can

* Herbert Relig. Laici, pag. 28.—" In fine, I profess that I have published " this treatise with a mind so far from being hostile to the best religion, or " averse to true faith, that I intended to have established both."

† De Rel. Laici, pag. 1, 4.

we be sure of it, since it depends upon God's secret judgments, which we cannot certainly know.* And we have heard Blount above own, That Deism is not safe, unless it be pieced out by some help from Christianity.† Well, is this the way our author asserts the honor of divine universal Providence, first to tell us, that its honor cannot be maintained without supposing a *sufficient religion universally to have obtained*, and then to tell us that he is *not sure* that ever there was such a religion? Is not this the plain way to bring the universal Providence of God in question?

Again, 2dly, Our author teaches, "That no particular religion "can support the honor of universal Providence." This I take to be also false. The Christian religion asserts and proves, that God, who has created all things, preserves them, and governs them in a way suitable to their nature and circumstances, and in so far clears the equity of God's proceedings with the Heathen world, in particular, as may satisfy sober men. It acquaints us, that God did, at first, provide man in a covenant security for eternal happiness, and in means sufficient for obtaining of it; that man, by his own fault, incapacitated himself for the use of these means, and forfeited the advantage of the covenant-security; that God, in justice hath left the Heathen world under the disadvantage of that forfeiture; that during the time he sees meet to spare them, he governs them, in such a way as is suitable to their lapsed state, of which we have spoken before. We confess we are not able to explain all the hard chapters in the book of Providence, and solve every difficulty relating thereto; but this affords no ground for the denial either of God's general or special providence. As the difficulties about God's omniscience, omnipresence, eternity, &c. will not justify a denial of these attributes, or the existence of a Deity vested with them; so neither will the difficulties about Providence justify a refusal of it; and if this vindication of Providence fail of giving satisfaction, I am sure Herbert's will never satisfy.

What our author adds about his *fides quantumvis laxa*, which he supposes some to stand up for, and maintain as a sufficient religion, I do not well understand. But yet since this expression is very often used in the writings of this author, in reproach of particular religions, especially the Christian, which lays the greatest stress upon faith, it cannot be passed without some remark. That which our author seems to intend by this *fides quantumvis laxa*, or "faith how lax soever it may be," is a faith that consists in a general assent to the truth of the doctrines, without any correspondent influence upon practice. And he would have us to believe that the Christian religion, or, at least, Christians, do reckon this

* De Rel. Gentil. pag. 217.
† Oracles of Reason, pag. 87.

sufficient to salvation. This is a base and disengenuous calumny. And our author could not but know it to be such, if he was acquainted either with the scriptures, or the writings and lives of that set of Christians against whom this calumny is particularly levelled, who unanimously teach, that the faith that is available, is that which *works by love*, and is to be found only in them who are *created in Christ Jesus to good works*. If Herbert was a stranger to the one or the other, he was the unmeetest person in the world to set up for a judge and censurer of them.

2. The next advantage that Herbert condescends on, of his catholic religion, is, *Quod probam facultatem homini insitarum conformationem, usumque doceat. Nulla enim datur veritas catholica, quæ non in foro interno describitur, vel non illuc saltem necessario reducitur.** That is, "This alone teaches man the "due use and application of his faculties." But this is only our author's assertion. Christianity is no less consistent with the due use of our faculties and their application to their proper objects, than our author's religion. It destroys none of them, lays none of them aside, and does violence to none of them; but restores, improves and elevates them to their most noble and proper use.

Our author adds, for a confirmation of his assertion, that there is no catholic verity, but what either is inscribed in the mind, or what may be reduced to some innate truth. Whether there is any verity inscribed in the mind in our author's sense, I question. Mr. Locke has proven, that there is none such, and in particular has evinced that our author's five articles are not innate truths, no not according to the description he himself gives of such notices. He examines the characters of innate truths given by our author, and undertakes to shew them not applicable to his five articles.†

3. Our author tells us, he embraced this catholic religion, *quod incontroversa a controversis distinguat*,‡ &c. It is needless to repeat all our author's words here. What he says is in short this; That "*particular religion* (and here he must be understood to "speak particularly of Christianity) *contains austere and frightful doctrines that prejudice some men of squeamish stomachs "at all religion*," (and is it to be wondered at, that men who have no heart to any religion, are easily disgusted?) But our author has provided them with one that will not offend the most nice and delicate palate, as consisting of *principles universally agreed to*; which he supposes such persons will readily close with, and so retain some religion, whereas otherwise they would have none.

* Herbert Rel. Laici, pag. 28.

† Locke's Essay on Human. Under. Book 1. Ch. § 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.

‡ "Because it distinguishes uncontroverted points from those which are "controverted."

Here our author evidently designs a thrust at the Christian religion, and insinuates that it is stuffed with *austere and horrid doctrines*. I know full well what are the doctrines he particularly aims at: the doctrines concerning *the corruption of man's nature, the decrees of God, the satisfaction of Christ*, are particularly intended. But if these doctrines are considered as delivered in the scriptures, or taught by Christians according to the scriptures, what is there offensive in them? What horrid or frightful?

I do indeed grant, that some Christians, through their weakness, without any ill design, have so represented, or rather misrepresented some of these points, particularly concerning the decrees of God, as to give offence to sober persons of all persuasions. But as to this, they, and they only, are to bear the blame. As for the doctrines, What have they done? Must the fault of the professors be cast on the religion they profess? This no reasonable man will allow to be just.

I do likewise acknowledge, that whereas there are different sentiments among Christians concerning some of these points; and some of the contending parties have so unfairly stated, and foully misrepresented the opinions of their opposers, in the disguise of imaginary consequences, or of consequences, at least, denied and abhorred by the maintainers of the opinions they oppose, so as to give some umbrage to this, startle weak men, and prejudice them against religion. This they do to expose their adversaries, and frighten others from the reception of their sentiments. For such I can make no excuse. The practice itself is scandalously disingenuous, and can admit of no reasonable vindication, and so fair an occasion being given, I cannot pass it without a remark. A notable instance of this sort I meet with in a book just now come to hand. The ingenious author of *the short Method with the Deists*, in a letter directed to Charles Gildon, newly recovered from Deism, cautions him against the Dissenters; and to enforce his caution, presents him with such an account of their opinions, as is indeed suited to frighten the reader. He tells him that they maintain, "That God "sees no sin in the elect, let them live never so wickedly. They "damn the far greater part of the world, by irreversible decrees "of reprobation, and say, that their good works are hateful to "God; and that it is not possibly in their power to be saved, let "them believe as they will, and live never so religiously: They "take away free will in man, and make him a perfect machine.— "They make God the author of sin, to create men on purpose to "damn them; they make his promises and threatenings to be of "no effect, nay, to be a sort of burlesqueing, and insulting those "whom he has made miserable, which is an hideous blasphemy."*

* Letter subjoined to the Deist's Manuel, page 22, 33.

But to what purpose is all this said? 1. Did not the writer know, That this is not a representation at all of the opinions maintained by the Dissenters, but of the consequences tacked to them by their adversaries? Does he not know, that they detest and abhor these positions as much as he does, that they refuse these to be consequences of them? Is it then candid to offer, that as their opinions, which they abhor, and which they will not allow to follow upon their opinion? Again, 2. Doth not this gentleman know that the principles to which he has tacked these consequences, are the very doctrines taught in the *articles of the Church of England*, unanimously maintained by all the great men of that church, till Bishop Laud's day; which were preached by them in the pulpit, taught in the schools, and upon all occasions avouched as the doctrine of the Church of England; and, as such, to this very day are owned by no inconsiderable number of that church? With what justice then, or ingenuity, can he call this the doctrine of the Dissenters? 3. From whom does he expect credit to this disingenuous account of the Dissenter's opinion? Such as know them, will believe nothing upon the reading of this passage; but that the writer either understood not the opinions he undertook to represent, or that against his light, he misrepresented them, and so is never to be credited again, without good proof, in any thing he says of them. 4. Was it the author's design, to gain a proselyte to the opposite opinions? This I believe it was. But this is the most unlucky way of management in the world; for if his disciple is a man of sense, he will be shy of believing that such monstrous opinions can be received by a body of men, among whom, there must be owned by their worst enemies, to be not a few learned and sober. And if he find himself abused, upon search, may he not be tempted, not only to reject this account, but all that he received upon the same authority? When persons of sense, who have been abused, are undeceived, they are wont ever after to incline to favorable thoughts of the persons and principles they were prejudiced against; and to suspect that cause of weakness, which cannot be supported, but by such mean and unmanly shifts, as this of representing the opposite opinion. 5. If the adverse party shall take the same course, what a fine work shall we have? And to speak modestly, they want not a colourable pretence for a retortion.—But who shall be the gainers? Neither of the contending parties surely: For men will never be beaten from their opinions by calumnies that they know to be unjust. None will gain, save they, who are lying at the catch, for pretences to countenance them in the rejection of the Christian religion. It is none of my business to debate this controversy with this author.

If he has any thing new to advance upon these heads, let him advance it, he will find antagonists in the Church of England, able

perhaps to cope with him, though the Dissenters should fail. This gentleman had managed his opposition with more modesty and ingenuity, if he had attentively perused the learned Bishop of Sarum's discourse on the 17th article of the Church of England.—But I hope this author, upon second thoughts, when his passion is over, will be ashamed of what he has written.

But now to return to Herbert and the Deists. If we abstract from these two abuses, and consider the doctrines of Christianity as represented in the scriptures, or according to them, there is no ground to charge them with any thing frightful, or of ill consequence to religion. Yea, I dare be so bold as to say, That if practical religion, consisting in godliness, righteousness and sobriety, is any where to be found in the world, it is to be found amongst those, as likely as any where else, and in as eminent a degree, who have been trained up in the belief, and under the influence of those very doctrines, which some, and particularly Herbert, would persuade us to be so horrid, as to frighten men at once out of their wits and religion. If it be said, that this is not owing to the influence of these principles. I answer, This, at least, proves those principles not inconsistent with practical religion, in as much as they, who believe them, are eminent in it; and, if we enquire of them, what has influenced their walk, they are ready to attest, that the belief of these very truths has had the principal influence upon that effect; and to offer a rational account of the tendency of these doctrines to promote practical religion.

Now we have wiped off the insinuated reproach, designed by our author, against the Christian religion. Let us next consider what there is in this plea. He tells us, his religion consists of incontroverted articles, and so will frigthen no body. But, 1. this is not true in fact, as we have demonstrated above. His articles have been controverted. The sufficiency of them has been believed by very few. Again, 2. Will our author say, That nothing is necessary, to religion, which is controverted? Will the Deists undertake this point? If so, their religion is lost, as is evident from what has been demonstrated above. 3. This no more proves our author's five articles to be a sufficient religion, than it proves one of them alone to be such. He who owns no more in religion, but this only, *there is a God*, may as well plead, that religion retains only what is incontrovertible. But the Deists will say, there are other points necessary. Well does not this give me an answer to their argument, when I say, there are other points necessary besides their five articles. 4. Whereas he would persuade us, that no man will scruple his religion: Is not this enough to make any reasonable man shy of admitting it, that its author and inventor dare not say positively, that it is sufficient to answer the purpose, for which it is designed, and that others undertake to demonstrate,

that if it is trusted to, it will prove a soul-ruining cheat? In a word, it is not worth the while to calculate a religion for those, who will admit nothing in religion, but what is incontroverted: for, in short, they are for *no religion*. And I think we have in particular evinced, that our author's five articles will be too hard in digestion for such delicate stomachs.

4. Our author tells us, that he embraced this catholic religion, *Quod concordiæ communis substructionem agat, &c.** That is, in short, let all the world agree to the sufficiency of our author's five articles, and leave all other things to be rejected or received as trifles, not necessary to be disputed about, and then there is an end of all the contests, then there is a foundation laid for everlasting peace, and the golden age will be retrieved, *Jam redit et virgo redeunt, Saturnia regna.*†

This trifle deserves rather pity than an answer. What! will all the world agree that this religion is sufficient, while its inventor durst not say so?

5. He embraced it, "*Quod authoritatem majestatemq; indubiam "religioni, et hierarchiæ inde politiæque conciliat,*" *&c.* That is, "because it conciliates respect to religion, to the ecclesiastical hie-"rarchy, and civil government." Religion will be respected, when it requires nothing but what is necessary. Church and state will be respected when it punishes nothing but transgressions against incontroverted articles.

But is not this to trifle with a witness? The weakness of this plea is so obvious, that I may well spare my pains in exposing it. Will it maintain the dignity of religion to confine it to a number of articles, which for any thing we know, or the Deists know, may cheat us of our reward in the end, since they cannot positively assure us of its sufficiency, and we are positively sure it is not sufficient? Will it maintain the honor of church officers, to admit a religion, which subverts the very foundation of all respect to them, *viz.* The divine institution of their order? As for the advantage of it to the civil government, the Deists may offer it to the consideration of the next parliament, and they will consider whether it is proper to conciliate respect to the civil government.

6. Our author embraced his religion, *Quod adeo non moliat religionem, ut ejus severitatis stimulum addat.* That is, "It is so "far from favouring liberty in sin, that it urges harder to virtue, "(severe virtue) than revealed religion." There is no hope of pardon here upon the satisfaction of another. Men must work for their life, and when they fail, they must satisfy by their repentance.

* "Because it lays a foundation for common concord."
† "Now Astra returns, the reign of Saturn returns."

Well, but do they, who teach the necessity of satisfaction exclude repentance? And if they make both satisfaction and repentance absolutely necessary, though each in its own order and place, to forgiveness, methinks they will yet have the advantage in point of severity. Again, but what if repentance will not satisfy? If this is so, and our author seclude all other satisfaction, will not his religion lead men rather to despair than to virtue.

7. Our author's last inducement was, *Quod sacrarum literarum fini ultimo intentioniq quadret*, &c. That is, "because this cath-"olic religion answers the ultimate design of the scriptures. All "the doctrines taught there level at the establishment of these five "catholic verities, as we have often hinted; there is neither sa-"crament, rite or ceremony, there enjoined, but what aims (or "seems to aim) at the establishment of these five articles."

8. But is not this a notable jest. Our author would persuade us, That his religion answers the great end of the scriptures, better than religion, which the scriptures themselves teach. If our author says not this, he says nothing. If the end of the scriptures is not good, it is not for the honor of our author's religion that it agrees with it: If it is good, and the religion taught in the scriptures themselves, answer their own design best, why then, I would chuse that religion, and leave our author to enjoy his own: If he says, *his*, answers it better, then I would desire to know where the compliment lies, that he designed to the scriptures. But I desire to know further of the Deists, Whether do the scriptures teach any thing besides these articles, to be necessary? Where do the scriptures tell that these are sufficient? Are divine institutions, sacraments, &c. necessary toward the compassing of the ends of religion? If they are not, how does it commend our author's religion, that it quadrates with the design of these institutions? If they are necessary and useful, this catholic religion is at a loss that wants them. I am sensible our author has cautioned against this, when he tells us, That they either do or seem to aim at this. I see that *old birds are not caught with chaff*. Now I have found it. This catholic religion, will really serve the purpose, that revealed truths and institutions do only seem to aim at. But after all, this is but *say* and not *proof*. And I will undertake to shew against all the Deists under heaven, that the confinement of religion to these five articcles, as taught by the light of nature, is not only not agreeable to the principal design of the scriptures, but inconsistent with it.

Thus I have considered the inducements which led Herbert to embrace this catholic religion, and found them wanting. And I must say, if this noble author had not been straitened by a bad cause, that is not capable of a rational defence, his learning, which is very considerable, could not but have afforded him better pleas. Charles Blount, in the close of his Religio Laici, tells us

It was for the same reasons he embraced Deism, and copies after Herbert, with some little variations. What he has, that our author has taken notice of in this place, will occur in the next chapter, where they are again repeated under another form. *Men that have but little to say have need to husband it well, and make all the improvement of it that they can.*

CHAP. XX.

Wherein the Queries offered by Herbert and Blount, for proving the sufficiency of their five Articles are examined.

THE learned Herbert in an appendix to his *Religio Laici*, moves some objections against himself, but fearing after he has said all he can, some may remain unsatisfied still, he betakes himself to another course, and essays to dispute his opposers into a compliance with his sentiments by Queries. Of this sort he proposes several. Charles Blount concludes his *Religio Laici* in the same method, with this difference, that he has added other seven queries, making in all fourteen, and prefixed this title, *Queries proving the validity of the five Articles.*

The arguments couched in these queries, in so far as they tend to prove the sufficiency of this catholic religion, are not new, but materially the same, which we have formerly considered. The method is indeed different, more subtle, and better suited to their great design. Direct proofs are less deceiving, and their weakness is more easy discoverable by vulgar capacities. Queries conceal the weakness of arguments, entangle, perplex and amuse less attentive minds; and by them, the subtle asserters of a bad cause ease themselves of the trouble of proving their ill grounded assertions, (which yet, by all rules of disputing, belongs to them only) and turn it over upon the defender. This is enough as to the method, to let us see how suitable it was to their purpose.

The Queries proposed by Blount are the same with Herbert's, and he adds others which Herbert wants. Wherefore we shall consider them as proposed by Mr. Blount. But whereas some of them are to more advantage urged by Herbert, we shall offer these in Herbert's words, that we may overlook nothing, which has the least appearance of force in this cause.

Query I. " Whether there can be any other true God, or w
" ther any other can justly be called *optimus maximus*, t
" greatest and best God, and common father of mankind, save t
" who exercises universal providence, and looks so far to the good
" of all men, as to provide them in common and sufficient or effec-

" tual means for obtaining the state of eternal happiness after this " life, whereof he has implanted a desire in their minds ? If the " laity or vulgar worship any other God, who does not exercise " this universal providence, are they not guilty of false worship, " or idolatry ? And if any one deny this common providence, is " he not guilty of treason against the divine Majesty, and of a " contempt of his goodness, yea, and of Atheism itself ?" Thus Herbert.* Blount proposes the same query, but more shortly, thus, " Whether there be any true God, but he that useth uni- " versal providence concerning the means of coming to him."†

The design of this query is to prove the necessity of a catholic religion, or a sufficient religion common to all mankind, and to fix the black note of atheism upon all who deny it. The argument whereby this is evinced is the very same, which we have examined above, as the Deists' first and great argument. What is added concerning universal Providence, we did consider in our answer to Herbert's first inducement to Deism. And so we might entirely pass this query as answered already, were it not for the seeming advantage given to it by this new dress, wherein it appears.

This query has a direct tendency to drive men into Atheism, and tempt them to lay aside all worship through fear of falling into idolatry. It is in itself self-evident, that if God has given all mankind, or to every man, means sufficient and effectual to lead them to eternal happiness, they must know of it, or, at least, there must be easy access for them to know it. With what propriety of speech can it be said, That the means leading to eternal happiness, are given to every man to be by him used for that end, if they know them not, or, at least, if the knowledge of them be not easily accessible to all, who will apply themselves to an inquiry after them ? Nor is it less evident, That the suitableness, efficacy and sufficiency of these means, for reaching this end, must be sufficiently intimated to them. If it is not so, how can men rationally be obliged to use means which they do not know to be proper for compassing the end ? With what courage or confidence can any rational man, with great application, over many difficulties, use, and all his life continue in the use of means, concerning which he has no assurance, that they will put him in possession of the end ? After all this pains he may miss the end he had in view. How can any reasonable soul please itself in such a course ? Can it be reasonably thought worthy of the wisdom and goodness of God, to give man the means of attaining eternal happiness, and means sufficient, and yet leave men in the dark as to the knowledge of this, That they are designed for, and sufficient to reach

* Herbert's Relig. Laici, Appendix. pag. 1, 2.
† Blount Rel. Laici, pag. 90.

the end for which they were given? What can rationally induce men in this case, to give God the praise of his goodness, in affording them these means, or to use them for that end, for which they were given, if this is hid from them? It is then evident, That, if God has afforded all men sufficient means of reaching eternal happiness, they must know this, or, at least, have easy access to know these means, what they are, and that they are designed to, proper for, and will prove effectual to this end. And consequently, if men find not such means, after search, they have evidently reason to conclude, that God has left them without them, at least, that they want them in their present circumstances; since after all their inquiries they cannot find them, nor can they discover that any means, they know of, will be effectual to reach this end.

This is evidently the condition of man at present, left to the mere light of nature. We have proved just now, That if God had given these sufficient means, every man must, at least, upon application, have had access to know them, and to know that they are sufficient.

But, upon application, they find no such matter, and therefore have reason to suspect, that God has not given them these means, if not positively to conclude that they are without them. Herbert himself glories that he was the first who found out what these means were. They had escaped the knowledge and industry of the most learned and diligent before his time. And if so, certainly the vulgar behoved to be at a loss about them. When he has found them, he dares not be positive about their sufficiency: "*Quam* "*etiam ob causam, neque ea sufficere (ad salutem,* viz. *æternam)* "*protenus dixerim,*" says he.* Yea, he more than insinuates, that we cannot come to be positively assured of their sufficiency, and so must remain in the dark, since the determination of this depends upon the sentiments of God, which are known to none, as he says. Now when a man so learned, so diligent, and so evidently prepossessed with a strong inclination to favor any means that had a shew of sufficiency, found so much difficulty to hit upon any such, and did so evidently hesitate about the sufficiency of these he had found; must not the laity, for whom, upon all occasions, he pretends so much concern, hesitate more? Yea, have they not reason evidently to conclude, that there are no such means provided for them?

But Herbert here teaches them, that none is to be acknowledged as the true God, nor worshipped as such, who has not provided every man, in effectual and sufficient means for attaining eternal happiness. Well may the layman say, "I neither know, nor ca "I ever be satisfied, that I have such means; yea, I have th.

* Herbert de Rel. Gent. pag. 217.

" greatest reason to think that I want them ; if the good God had " given them, he would not have mocked me, by concealing them, " and so precluding me from the use of them ; he would have " pointed me to them, and intimated their sufficiency, so as to " make it knowable to me, upon application, without which he " could never expect that I should use them : I have therefore " reason to conclude myself destitute of them, and so, I will wor- " ship no God, since there is none that has provided me in the " means necessary to eternal happiness : For if I should, I would " be guilty of worshipping one, who is an idol, and not the true " God." Here we see where this gentleman's principles must inevitably lead the poor man, either to direct Atheism, or to worship one, whom he has reason vehemently to suspect to be merely an idol, and not the true God.

Having thus discovered the dangerous tendency of this query, I shall now give a direct answer to it. And to it I say, That *the God*, who makes man, implants in his child's mind a desire of eternal felicity, intimates to him that he is made for this end, obliges him in duty to pursue this end, under a penalty in case he fail of it, and yet denies or leaves his child without the means that are absolutely necessary for compassing it, antecedently to any fault upon the child's part, will scarcely obtain the titles of *optimus maximus*, *great* and *good*, or of a *common Father*.

But the GOD who made man perfect, in his original state, and put him in the full possession of all the means that were necessary to obtain that end, whatever it was, for which he was made, and which he was in duty obliged to pursue, loses not his interest in, and unquestionable right to the title of *optimus maximus*, *great* and *good ;* nor does he cease to be a *common Father*, and to act the part of such an one, if, when his children contrary to their duty, have rebelled against him, by their own fault dropped the knowledge of the end, for which they were made, lost the knowledge of the means, whereby it is to be obtained, put themselves out of a capacity of using the means, or reaching the end ; if, I say, in this case, he leaves them to smart under the effects of their own sin, and treats them no more as children, but as rebels, who can blame him ? Does he not act every way as it becomes one, who by the best of titles is not merely a father, but the sovereign ruler and governor of all his creatures, to whom of right it belongs to *render a just recompence of reward* to every transgressor ?

Now, this is the case, as we have already proven. If the Deists will make their argument conclusive, they must prove that this is not the case with man. And when we see this done, we shall then know what to say. Till then we are not much concerned with their query. If they say, How can this be ? Can men by the light of nature know how this came to pass ? I answer, that it is not the

question, How it came to be so? But whether, in fact, it be so? That it really is thus, is before proven. The Heathens have confessed it. And though we should never come to be satisfied, how it came about, yet that it really is so, is enough to acquit God.

Nor is God's universal Providence hereby everted, he still governs all mankind suitably to their condition. He rules those, whom of his sovereign and undeserved grace, he has seen meet to deal with, in order to return to his family, in a way of infinite mercy and grace. He governs the rest of the world, whom in his sovereign and adorable justice and wisdom, he hath left to lie under the dismal consequences of their own sin, in a way becoming their state. He provides them in all things, that do necessarily belong to the ends, for which they are spared. Further, he leaves himself *not without a witness* as to his goodness, *in that he does good, gives them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.* Which is sufficient to shew his superabundant goodness, that reaches even to the unthankful and evil, and gives them ground to conclude, That their want of what is further necessary, flows not from any defect of goodness on his part; but from their own sins, of many of which their own consciences do admonish them. If God vouchsafes the means of recovery to any, they have reason to be thankful to sovereign grace. If God gives not, what he may justly refuse, who can in justice complain of him? They must leave their complaint upon themselves, and acquit God. And while man is continued in being, it will remain his indespensible duty to worship this God, who made him, spares him, notwithstanding of his sins, for a time, punishes him less than his iniquities deserve, and confers many other undeserved favours on him. Nor is he guilty of *worshipping an idol* in doing so.

Thus we have answered this query: And I might now propose to the Deists a counter query, "Whether they who make that necessary to the support of the universal providence of God, his goodness, and consequently his being, of which no man can be sure that it really is, which all men have reason to believe is not, and which most men, who have made it their business to consider the case seriously, do firmly believe not to be in being, may not reasonably be suspected to design the overthrow of these attributes of God, and consequently of his very being?" Thus Vaninus endeavored to establish Atheism: he ascribes such attributes to God, and endeavored to fix such notions of his perfections, as could not be admitted, without the overthrow of other perfections, unquestionably belonging to him, or owned in any consistency with reason and experience. For he well knew, that if once he could bring men to believe God to be such an one, if he was, they would be brought under a necessity of denying, that there was any God.

Query II. "Whether these means appear universally other-
"wise, than in the foresaid five catholic articles ?*

These gentlemen think they have, by their first query, sufficiently proved, that there must be a catholic religion : Now they will prove theirs to be it. But I have undermined the foundation, and so the superstructure falls. I have evinced, that there is no such sufficient catholic religion, by reason and experience. I have proved that the pretence of its being necessary to support the notion of God's providence and goodness, can never possibly persuade any considerate man, to believe against his reason and experience, against the sight of his eyes, and what he feels within himself, that he really is in possession of a sufficient religion, without revelation ; and consequently that the urging of this pretence can serve for nothing, if not to make men question the goodness and providence of God, and so his very being, to the overthrow of all worship and religion. I have moreover made it appear, that these five articles are not catholic, and though they were so, yet are not sufficient.

Query III. "Whether any thing can be added to these five
"articles or principles, that may tend to make a man more honest,
"virtuous, or a better man ?" So Blount.† To this query Herbert adjects a clause, viz. "Provided these articles be well ex-
"plained in their full latitude.‡ And is not this the principal end of religion ?

By the foregoing queries the Deists think they have proved the necessity of a catholic religion ; and that their five articles is the catholic religion. By this query they pretend to prove their religion sufficient.

To this purpose they tell us, That their five articles are sufficient to make a man virtuous, honest and good ; that this is the principal end of religion ; and that nothing can be added to them, which can be any way helpful to this end. If by making a man virtuous, honest and good, they mean no more, than the Heathens meant by these words, who took them to intend no more, but an abstinence from the more gross outward acts of vice, contrary to the light of nature, with some regard in their dealings among men, to the common and known rules of righteousness, and usefulness : If, I say, this is their meaning, which I conceive it must be, then I deny that this is the principal end of religion. No man that understands what religion means, will say it. The Heathens were influenced to this by other motives, than any thing of regard to the authority of the One true God. Their Ethicks, which enjoined this goodness, virtue and honesty, pressed it by considera-

* Blount Rel. Laici. pag. 90. Herb. Rel. Laici. Appendix.
† Ibid. pag. 91. ‡ Herb. Ibid.

tions of a quite different nature. Of God, his legislature, his laws, as such, they took little or no notice, as observed from Mr. Locke before; and therefore, whatever usefulness among men there was to be found in their virtues, they had nothing of religion, properly so called, in them.

But if by making a man honest, virtuous and good, they mean the making of him inwardly holy, and engaging him in the whole of his deportment, in both outward and inward acts, to carry as becomes him, toward God, his neighbor and himself, with a due eye to the glory of God as his end, and a just regard to the authority of God, as the formal reason of this performance of duty in outward and inward acts: If, I say, they take their words in this sense, I do own this to be one of the principal ends of religion. But then I deny that ever any man, by their five articles, as taught by the light of nature, or by any other of the like kind, known only by the mere light of nature, was in this sense, since the entrance of sin, made virtuous and good. Nay, the moral Heathens were not led to that shadow of virtue and goodness, which they had in the sense beforementioned, from any regard to these five articles, as they are articles of religion; that is, as they are principles directive as to the duty, which man owes to the One only True and Supreme Being.

And taking virtue, goodness, and honesty in this last sense, which is that alone wherein we are concerned, I have above proven the light of nature, and particularly these five articles, as known by it, utterly insufficient to make any man virtuous, honest and good. And have demonstrated not *one*, but *many things* besides what is contained in these five articles, however explained to the utmost advantage that can be done by mere unassisted reason, to be *absolutely necessary* to the *ends of religion*.

Nor will what Herbert has adjected mend the matter, viz. *That his articles must be well explained in their full latitude.* These words, if they have any sense, it is this, "It is not enough to believe and receive our articles, as in general proposed, this will make no man good. He must not only, for instance, agree to it, that there is one Supreme God, and that he is to be worshipped by a virtuous life, but he must be acquainted with all the attributes of this God, necessary to be known, in order to the direction of his practice, and he must understand and be fixed as to the nature, measure and all other necessary concerns of these virtues that belong to this duty." This is undeniably the meaning of this expression, and this inevitably overthrows all that our author has been building. Were these five articles, in this latitude, universally agreed to? Our author knew to the contrary. If any man should assert it, it were enough to make him be hissed off the stage, as either brutishly ignorant of the world, or impudently disingenuous.

Well then, our catholic religion is lost. Again, since the explications belong as much to our author's religion as the articles themselves, (for without them he confesses the articles not sufficient) how shall the poor layman ever be satisfied about them? Have there not been as many, and as intricate disputes about them, as about the articles of revealed religion? Where is now the boasted agreement? Where is the uncontroverted religion? What attribute of God has not been questioned, disputed and denied? Have not his creation of all things, his Providence, &c. which of all others have the most remarkable influence upon practice, by many been denied? Have not horrid notions of them been advanced by some? What will now become of men of squeamish stomachs, that can admit of no religion, but one that is smooth, and has no rugged controversies in it? Why, poor gentlemen, they must part with our author's religion, and so be, as they were before, *men of no religion.* Upon the whole, we see that this query, designed to prove the *Deists' religion sufficient*, has proved it a *chimera.*

Query IV. "Whether any things that are added to these five "principles from the doctrine of faith, be not uncertain in their ori- "ginal?" So Blount.* Herbert to this adds, "That though God "be true, yet the laity can never be certain about revelation: "For, (says he) how do ye know that God spake these words to "the prophets? How do you know that they faithfully repeated or "wrote what God spoke to them, and no more? How do ye know "that transcribers have performed their part faithfully? How do ye "know that that particular revelation made to a particular priest, pro- "phet or lawgiver, concerns not only all other priests and lawgivers, "but also the laity? Especially, how shall ye know this, if the matter "of revelation require you to recede from reason?"† And here we have a proof of the *fourth reflection*, of his unfair treatment of the Christian revelation, which we made above, Chap. 13. For either he insinuates, that the scriptures teach things contrary to reason; and if so, where was our author's ingenuity when he called it *optima religio*, and upon other occasions pretended so much respect to it? Does not this justify our charge of disingenuity against him, in the *first reflection* we have made, in the place now referred to? If he owns, that this is not the fault of the Christian religion, but of other pretended revelations; then he justifies our *fourth reflection*, wherein we charge him with jumbling revelations, true and false together, those that have, at least, seemingly fair pretences, and these that have none; and deceitfully charges upon all *in cumulo*, the faults peculiar to the worst. If this is not enough to persuade you to the truth of his protestation abovementioned, *viz.* that he designed no hurt to the Christian religion, he has an observation, with

* Blount Rel. Laici, pag. 91.
† Herb. Rel. Laici, Appendix, pag. 3.

which he concludes this query, that will beat the persuasion of it into your brains, or else of somewhat beside; and it is this, in his own words, "I think it worthy of the layman's observation, that "there is this difference betwixt the pretended revelations offered "to us, by the lawgivers, and those offered to us by priests, inter- "preters of the oracles God, of (under which notion he takes in all "prophets) whether they gave their revelations or responses for "hire, or merely to set off their own conceits *(sive venales sive "nugivendi;)* that the revelations, which the lawgivers pretended "they had from heaven, and promulgated as such did usually make "the people more just and sociable, or agree better together; "whereas the pretended revelations of the priest and prophets, of "whatever sort, (or in his own words, *Oraculorum interpretibus "sive venalibus sive nugivendis)* did usually make the people "more unjust or impious, and did divide them among themselves*."

Here is a rare observation, worth gold to the layman. He may, with more safety, receive and use the laws which Lycurgus, Solon, and the other Heathen lawgivers pretended they had from heaven; and I would add Moses and his writings, but that I fear our author has cast him, because he set up for an interpreter of God's mind, and, upon some extraordinary occasions, acted the part of a priest: Our author, I say, would persuade him, that he may, with more advantage, read these writings, than those of the prophets and apostles, or any other of the sacred writers, who were not lawgivers. It is true, both are to be looked upon but as pretended revelations, and so in effect cheats: but the lawgivers beguiled the people to their advantage; whereas these rogues of priests, and others who joined with them, offered cheats that were hurtful to justice among men, and the peace of society.

If any say, I am wresting our author's words and that certainly his comparison respects onlyt he Heathen lawgivers, and the Heathen priests; I answer If this is the meaning, it is altogether impertinent to the design of the query, which avowedly aims at this, "That laymen, living among us, (for I do not believe our author designed to send his book to the Pagans) can never be satisfied as to the truth of any particular revelation," and all his subordinate queries do directly thrust at the scriptures; and then he closes with this observation, as of the greatest moment to the design of the query. And therefore I cannot own, that I have done any injury to our author, in the interpretation I have given of it; but I have spoke his meaning more plainly, than he thought convenient to do. The next query is to the same purpose, and therefore we shall purpose it, and answer both.

Query V. "Supposing the originals true, whether yet they be "not uncertain in their explications; so that unless a man read

* Herb. Rel. Laici, Appendix, pag. 3.

" all authors, speak with all learned men, and know all languages, " it be not impossible to come to a clear solution of all doubts?" Thus Blount.* Herbert, in his fifth query, speaks to the same purpose, he makes a huge outcry about the schisms and sects that are among us, and tells us plainly, that if we will adhere stiffly to revelation, we must of necessity get an *infallible judge*, to whose decisions we must submit in all things. He endeavours to prove that the scriptures will not decide the controversy; and impertinently enough labours to disprove what none ever asserted; that miracles wrought by the writers will not decide the differences about the meaning of their writings. For it is evident this query only respects the *meaning* of the revelation, as the former did its *original*. However, I know who will thank our author for asserting the necessity of a *living infallible judge*. If any think I have wronged our author as to this, let them inspect his book, and they will find I have done him justice. But for the satisfaction of those who have it not, I shall subjoin his own express words: he informs the layman, that he can never be satisfied about the meaning of this revelation, about which there are so many controversies, unless either he can " *Linguas cunctas ediscere, scriptores cunctos* " *celebriores perlegere, doctiores etiam, qui non scripserunt, con-* " *sulere; aut aliquis saltem controversiarum illarum ex consensu* " *communi summus constitueretur judex.*"† And then he goes on to prove, that there is no other possible way of deciding these differences, and coming to the meaning of revelation, but in these two ways pointed at in the words now quoted. The first is ridiculous, and therefore we must be Deists or Papists.

The design of these queries is obvious. They were afraid that their arguments might prove weak, which they had advanced for the sufficiency of their catholic religion; and now, in effect, they tell the laity, that if they have a mind to have a religion at all, they must close with this which the Deists present them. And though we cannot satisfy you, may the Deists say, in all points, about our catholic religion, yet you must rest satisfied with it: for you can never be sure about revelation, either as to its original or meaning. Men brought to such a strait, since they cannot have such a religion as they would wish, must take such as they can get.

These queries directly attack revelation; and so belong not to our subject. The learned defenders of revealed religion have considered those trifles, and repelled the force of them, I shall only consider them, in so far as they belong to our subject, and offer the few following animadversions upon them.

* Blount Rel. Laici, ubi supra, pag. 91.

† " Learn all languages, read over all the most celebrated writers, consult " the most learned men, who have not written, or at least some supreme judge " of all controversies must be appointed by common consent."

1. I say, if the layman must, for the sake of those difficulties, quit revealed religion, he must part with the Deists' catholic religion upon the same account. Herbert has told us, and it were indeed ridiculous to say the contrary, that this catholic religion is comprehensive not only of their five articles, but their explications. Now, are there not as many, and no less intricate debates about this religion, as about that which is revealed? Is not its sufficiency disputed? Must not the layman read all books, converse with all learned men, &c. before he can rest satisfied in it? Are there not intricate and perplexed disputes about the authority, extent, use, matter and manner of the promulgation of the law of nature? Where shall the layman find the notices that belong to this religion? Shall he turn inward, and find them inscribed upon his own mind? So our author advises. But learned men say, and pretend to prove the contrary. And if most men look into their own minds, they will either say with the latter that they are not there; or complain that they are become so dim that they cannot read them unless some charitable Deist will afford them his spectacles. But when they have got them, what shall they do next for the explications? Are the explications written there too? The Deists dare not say it. But these likewise are necessary, say the Deists, as we have heard from Blount and Herbert before. Shall the laity consult the Doctors about their meaning? But do not Doctors differ? Do not the Magi, and not a few learned Greeks, as Zeno and Crysippus, &c. teach Sodomy to be lawful? Was it not the judgment of others, that a wise man ought "*To steal, and commit adultry and sacrilege upon occasions, for none of these things are by nature evil.*" So Theodorus, as Hesychius illustriously reports in his life.* Does not Aristippus and Carneades, with many others, overthrow the whole law of nature, telling us, that nothing is naturally just or unjust, good or evil, but by virtue of some arbitrary law? Has not the same opinion been revived, broached and inculcated by Hobbes and others among ourselves? Has not Plato long since observed in his *Phedon*, "That if any "one name either silver or iron, presently all men agree what it is "that is intended; but if they speak of that which is just or good, "presently we are at variance with others, and among ourselves." In a word, he that will cast at revelation, for its controversies, is a fool to go over to natural religion, in expectation to be free of controversy. Thus we are at least upon a level with the Deists.

2. If the layman, in defiance of the Deists' queries, may reach a satisfying assurance of the divine authority of the scriptures, where is then the necessity for his quitting revelation? It will quite evanish. This, I say, he may have, without troubling his head about

* See Dr. Owen on the Sabbath, Exercit. 3. § 13.

impertinent queries of this sort, if he duly attend to that one, plain and rational direction given by our LORD, John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

The scriptures containing a full account of all the concerns of the Christian religion, are exhibited to him, and put in his hand by the church as a revelation from God, wherein all his concerns for eternity are wrapped up. I do not plead, that the testimony of the church is a sufficient ground for bottoming his faith. But this I say, that the testimony of the church is a sufficient ground for any man to judge and conclude firmly, that its pretensions are not contemptible, and that it deserves the most serious consideration imaginable. But when I speak of the church, to whose testimony this regard is to be paid, we set aside, as of no consideration, a multitude of persons, whether of the clergy or laity, who do, in their practice visibly contradict the confessed rules of their religion. Such persons are scarce to be reckoned of any religion, and their testimony is of no consideration, either for or against religion. Nor do we restrict the notion of the church to the representatives of it, much less to the Church of Rome, that monopolize this name. But I take it for that body of men, of whatever station or quality, who have received, and do act answerably to the Christian religion they profess, in some good measure at least. Now I say, the testimony of this church, or body of men, deserves great regard in this matter. If we consider them, there are among them persons of untainted reputation, enemies themselves being judges. Not a few of them are of unquestionable judgment, deep discerning, solid learning, and strict inquirers after truth. They are not a few but many. Nor are they confined to one nation or age, but such they have been in all ages, in all nations, where Christianity has obtained free access. Many of them are persons, whom envy itself cannot allege biassed, by external gain of one sort or of another. They are persons of different, nay cross civil interests, and of different outward conditions. Such are the persons who give this testimony. Again, if we consider their testimony, they bear witness to the Christian religion in all its concerns, its truth, sufficiency, usefulness to all the ends of religion, with respect to time or eternity, and its efficacy for beginning, carrying on, maintaining, reviving and consummating such as sincerely receive it, in godliness towards God, righteousness towards men, sobriety with respect to ourselves; and that both as to inward principles and outward acts. Further, if we consider in what way they give in their testimony, the weight of it will appear. They bear witness to all this, not only by their words, but by their deeds, living in a conformity to it, parting with all that is dearest to them for it, cheerfully undergoing the greatest hardships, patiently bearing the most cruel torments, to the loss of

life itself; and this they do neither upon mere constraint, nor on the other hand, from a rash and inadvertent neglect of a due regard to the unquestionable advantages of peace, health, life, and the other good things they part with; but they venture upon doing and suffering freely and of choice, upon a sober, rational consideration of the advantage of cleaving to their religion, and of its being such, as will do more than compensate any loss they can sustain for it. Again, they bear witness to the concerns of this religion, as to a thing that they have not received upon bare hearsay, but upon narrow scrutiny, as that whereof they have the experience. They do not only give this testimony, when it is new to them; but after long trial, when they are most sedate and composed, and when they can expect nothing of advantage by it, and when they must lay their account with contempt, opposition and loss. They give this testimony in whatever place they are, where it is honored, or where it is opposed. They give it with the greatest concern, and recommend this religion to those whom they would least deceive, even with their dying breath, when they dare not dissemble, and that after a long trial, in the course of their lives, in the greatest variety of outward conditions, sufficient to have discovered the weakness of their religion, if it had any. They have made choice of this religion, and adhered to it, under the greatest outward disadvantages, who were not prepossessed in its favor by education, but prejudiced against it; and they have embraced it, where they had a free choice to accept or reject it, and advantages to tempt them to a refusal. They do not require an implicit belief as Mahometans do, but provoke to experience and trial. Now I dare boldly say, that this testimony is a better, more plain, obvious, and every way more justifiable ground of rational assent to the divine authority, truth, efficacy, and sufficiency of the Christian religion, than can be given for the like assent, to any other particular religion whatsoever. Nay, there is more in this one testimony, as it is, or at least may be qualified with other circumstances, discernible even by the most ordinary layman, here for brevity's sake omitted, (the urging this in its full strength, not being my present design) than can be offered for all the other religions in the world, natural, or pretending to revelation, were all that can be said for them altogether put in one argument. Any reasonable man cannot but think his eternal concerns safer in following this society, than any other whatsoever: There is not such another company elsewhere to be met with, as might be demonstrated to the conviction of the stiffest opposer. But this I plead not at present. I say not, that he should build his persuasion of Christianity upon this testimony. All that I make of it is this, That he has reason to consider the scriptures, as thus attested, as a book that has, at least, very plausible pretences to divinity, a book that deserves serious perusal, a book that cannot possi-

bly have any obvious and unquestionable arguments of imposture, and consequently, that it deserves to be read through, and fully heard before it is cast; and that though there occur in it some things that he cannot presently understand, or whose use and value he cannot take up, he ought not therefore to be prejudged against the divine authority of the book upon the account of them, till, at least, it is heard to an end. For, who knows not, that things which appear incredible, unreasonable, yea ridiculous, before their causes, order and design are understood, may, upon acquaintance with these, appear convincingly credible, useful, and every way reasonable? This is all I claim of the layman at present, and he deserves not the name of a reasonable man who will deny it upon such a ground. And if the Deists had considered this, we had not been troubled with the many childish and trifling prejudices, wherewith their *Oracles of Reason* and other books are stuffed. Nor could they have been diverted from the serious consideration of the scriptures, by such pitiful exceptions.

Well, the scriptures being put into the layman's hand, thus attested, he sets himself to the perusal of them, and such a perusal as the case requires; looking to God for direction, he tries the means appointed by them, for satisfaction as to their divinity. While he is seeking light from God, in such a matter, he dare not expect it, if he continue in the neglect of known duty, or the commission of known sin, and therefore he studies to avoid them. He is resolved to follow truth, as it is discovered, and to subscribe to the scripture pretensions, if they give sufficient evidence of themselves. Nothing is here resolved, but what is reasonable beyond exception. In pursuance of this just resolution, he reads them, and upon his perusal, what passages he cannot understand, or reach the reason of, he passes at present and goes on, till he see further what may be the intention of them. And he finds in plain and convincing expressions, his own case, and the case of all men by nature, clearly discovered, and urged upon him by this book; the words pierce his soul, dive into his conscience, and make manifest the *secrets of his heart*, (known to none but God) manifest his sins, in their nature and tendency, and all their concernments. His conscience tells him, *all this is true* to a tittle, though he did not know it before, and none other save the heart-searching God, could know what was transacted within his heart, though overlooked by himself. The discovery not only carries with it an evidence of truth, which his conscience subscribes to; but the words wherein it is expressed, bear themselves in upon his soul with a light, authority and majesty formerly unknown, evidencing their meaning and truth, and filling the soul with unusual and awful impressions of the majesty and authority of the speaker. Thus being convinced and judged, and the *secrets of his heart made manifest*, he is

forced to *fall down and acknowledge, that God is* in the word *of a truth.* And he is ready to say, *Come see a* book *that told me all that ever I did* in my life, *is not this* the book of God? Thus he stands trembling under the sense of the wrath of God, due to him for his sins. He reads on, and finds in the same book a discovery of *relief*, frequently proposed in plain passages. He is urged to an acceptance of it. The discovery carries along with it a full evidence of the *suitableness*, *excellency*, and *advantage* of the remedy: And by a gust of its goodness, or inward sense, he is drawn to an approbation. Upon this approbation the promised effects follow. His fears are dissipated, his hopes revived, his soul is made acquainted with formerly unknown and God-becoming expressions of the nature and excellencies of God, and going still on every day, repeated experience occur of the justness of the discoveries the word makes of himself, the authority of its commands, faithfulness of its promises, the awfulness of its threatenings, none of which fall to the ground. He, in a word, has repeated experience of the unparalleled efficacy of the whole, for the cure of his darkness, his corruption, &c. which despised other applications; and towards his advancement to a sincere and conscientious regard to all his duties, outward and inward, toward God and man.

Let us now but suppose this to be the case with the man upon his perusal of the scriptures, though with respect to innumerable souls, it is more than a bare supposition: upon this supposition, I say, 1. The man has the highest security he can desire, that this book is, as to its substance, the very word of God, as certainly as if it were spoken to him immediately by a voice from heaven. This cannot well be denied by any that understands this supposition. 2. I say, the man thus convinced may laugh at all Herbert's queries as impertinent. He finds God speaking by the word, and owning it for his. He needs not therefore trouble himself who wrote it, or whether they were honest men who transcribed it, or whether they performed their part, whether it was designed for him; and the like may be said of all his other queries. He will find no occasion for that distinction betwixt *traditional* or *original revelation*, mentioned by Herbert, and insisted upon by Mr. Locke,* on what design I leave others to judge. In this case, as to the substance, it is all one to him, as if it had not come through another hand; nor has he reason to suspect, that God would permit to creep into, or stand in a book, which for the substance, he still owns and evinces to be from him, any thing of a coarser alloy, at least any such corruption as might make it unworthy of him to own it, or unsafe to use it to the design it was given for: Yea, he has the strongest security that the perfections and providence of God

* Locke's Essay on Hum. Understand. Book 4. Cap. 18. § 6. 7. 8.

of God can afford, to rest fully assured of the contrary. He has no reason to stumble at passages that he cannot understand, or such as by others are reckoned ridiculous, but rather to say with Socrates, in another case, "What I understand I admire, and "am fully convinced to be every way worthy of its author; and "therefore I conclude what I understand not, to be equally excel-"lent, and that it would appear so if I understood all its con-"cerns." Finally, This supposition takes off all pretence of hesitation about the meaning of the scriptures, as to what the man is particularly concerned in. The story of the necessity of an *infallible judge*, is built upon this supposition, That the scriptures are so obscure in matters necessarily relating to the faith and practice of the vulgar, that they cannot be understood by them satisfyingly, in the use of appointed means. This supposition is palpably false, contrary to scripture, reason and experience, as is evinced by our writers against the Papists, who fully consider their pleas, and particularly those which Herbert and the Deists have borrowed from them, who may be consulted by the reader.

3. Thus far I have made appear, that the layman has the justest reason in the world to look upon it as his duty, or the will of God, that he should give the scriptures such a perusal. 2. That in doing his will there is a way, at least, supposable, wherein he may reach full satisfaction in his own mind, in defiance of the Deists' queries about the divinity of the scriptures, and reach the highest rational security, even that of faith, bottomed upon divine testimony, and inward sense or experience; which Herbert himself, upon all occasions, truly asserts to be the highest certainty. I shall now advance one step further, and assert, that this is more than a mere supposition, that it is matter of fact, that they, who do receive the scriptures in a due manner, especially among the laity or illiterate, do find and rest upon this ground in their persuasion. Upon this ground it was alone, that multitudes did at first receive it, and for it reject the religions they were bred in; and not as the Deists imagine, upon a blind veneration to teachers, priests or preachers, whom by education, they were taught to abhor; And upon this ground they still do adhere to it, and receive it as written in the scriptures. The words of Mr. Baxter, as I find them quoted by Mr. Wilson (for I have not seen Baxter's book in answer to Herbert *de Veritate*) are remarkable to this purpose, "I think, says he, That in the very hearing or reading, God's Spi-"rit often so concurreth as that the will itself should be touched "with an internal gust or savour of the goodness contained in the "doctrine, and at the same time the understanding with an inter-"nal irradiation, which breeds such a sudden apprehension of the "verity of it, as nature gives men of natural principles. And I

"am persuaded, that this increased by more experience and love, "and inward gusts, doth hold most Christians faster to Christ, "than naked reasonings could do. And were it not for this, un- "learned ignorant persons were still in danger of apostasy, by "every subtle caviller that assaults them. And I believe that all "true Christians have this kind of internal knowledge, from the "suitableness of the truth and goodness of the gospel to their new- "quickened, illuminated, sanctified souls."* The apostle tells us, *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*—If the Deist say, How proves the layman this to me? I answer, That is not the question. For the design of the Deists in these queries, is to prove, that the layman cannot be assured about the original and meaning of revelation in his own mind, and so must close with their catholic religion. Now in direct contradiction to this, I say, here is a ground to stand upon. And if he has this ground, even a sober Deist must allow he has no reason to be moved from it, but must fully *know that the doctrines are of God.* And so I have overthrown the design of the query. As for the Deists' question, How he proves it to others? it is impertinent. It is not reasonable to expect, that every common man can stop the mouths of gain-sayers. It is enough for him if he can give a reason, which is good, and must be owned such in itself. If the Deist questions matters of fact, that he finds matters so and so; I answer, A blind man may question whether I see this paper now before me; and yet I have good reason to believe it is there, though I should fail of convincing him.

If the Deist says, I have perused the scriptures, and found no such effect; I answer, in matters of experience one affirmative proves more than twenty negatives; unless the application is in all respects equal, and the effect depend upon a necessary cause: For where a voluntary agent is the cause of the effect, there it does not necessarily follow upon the like application. But to wave this general, which would require more room to explain, than I can allow it in this place, I say further, to the complainer, Have you given the scripture such a perusal, as I have proved in a way of duty you are obliged to do? Have you used the means, in so far, at least, as is possible for you? Have you sought, have you waited for God's guidance and preservation from mistake, and from unjust prejudices against him, his works, his word, (if this be such) and his ways? Do you carefully study to avoid what may reasonably be thought, even by a considerate Heathen, to obstruct the grant of the assistance desired from God? Do you carefully avoid known sin? Do you endeavor the performance of what you know to be duty? Are you resolved to follow in practice where light leads? If

* Baxter's Animad. on Herbert de Verit. page 135. quoted by M. J. Wilson, Scriptures interpreter asserted, Appendix page 20.

you dare not frankly answer, you have no reason to complain. For my own part, I am persuaded, that in fact, none who have done his will even thus far, have reason to table a complaint against the word. Others who take a quite contrary course, are unreasonable in the complaint. Disputes about what might be the case, upon supposition of a person's doing all, that in his present circumstances he is able to do, and yet miss of satisfaction as to the divine authority of the word, until the subject of this question be found, I think not myself concerned in, at least in a controversy with the Deists. It is unreasonable to question the scripture's authority, or the evidence of it, upon suppositions that never were in being, and I am persuaded, never shall have a being.

But these things I leave. This dispute lies wholly out of our road. But I have been obliged to this digression, in pursuit of the Deist's impertinent queries. I say *impertinent*, because, were all granted that is aimed at in these queries, it will not avail one rush, towards the proof of the point the Deists are on, viz. *the validity of their religion*: For were revealed religion uncertain, is it a good consequence, that therefore the Deists' religion is certain? What I have said in defence of revealed religion, I would have to be looked upon only as a digression, and not as a full declaration of my opinion; much less would I have this understood as the substance of what can be pleaded on behalf of that blessed book that has *brought life and immortality to light*. This is not the hundredth part of what even I could say, were this my subject. And others have said, and can plead much more than I am able. However, this I owed to the truth of God. Such as would see all these pretences against revelation, repelled, are desired to consult those, who designedly treat of this subject.

There are other things in these queries now animadverted upon, that deserve rather contempt than an answer. In particular, it is supposed, as one of the principal foundations of those two queries, now under consideration, That a man cannot reach certainty in his own mind upon solid grounds, and rationally acquiesce in it as such, unless "he knows all that can be said against it, read all books, converse with all learned men, &c." than which there is not a more extravagant expression in *Bevis* and *Garagantua*. Admit it, and I shall demonstrate against any that will undertake it, that *nothing is certain*. I cannot but admire that so learned a person as Herbert could use such an extravagant supposition. But what will not a bad cause drive a man upon? This confirms what is ordinarily observed, that there is no opinion, however unreasonable, but has some learned man for its patron, if not inventor.

We shall now go on to the rest of the queries, which will be of more easy dispatch. That I have dwelt so long upon these two, is out of regard to revelation and its honor, and not from any weight in the queries. As for them, this alone had been a sufficient an-

swer, which I propose in a way of a counter query, and conclude with it—"If a layman that is illiterate cannot be satisfied as to the "truth of revealed religion, how doth this prove the Deists' five "articles to be a sufficient and good religion."

Query VI. "Supposing all true in their originals, and in their "explications, whether yet they be so good for the instructing of "mankind, that bring pardon of sin upon such easy terms, as to "believe the business is done to our hand?" And,

Query VII. "Whether this doctrine doth not derogate from vir-"tue and goodness, while our best actions are represented as im-"perfect and sinful, and that it is impossible to keep the ten com-"mandments, so as God will accept of our actions, doing the best "we can?" Thus Blount gives us Herbert's sixth query in two.* There is no material difference in Herbert, save only that he harps upon the old string, and spends himself in bitter invectives against the scripture doctrine about the decrees of God, of which we have said enough before. And therefore I think it needless to burthen this paper with his words.

The two former queries struck at scripture revelation itself; these two strike at the matter contained in the scrtptures. And here there is a double charge laid against the doctrine revealed in the scriptures, as black as hell can invent, and as false as it is black. The sixth query charges it with favoring sin, by bringing pardon upon too easy terms; and the seventh charges it with derogating from virtue.

For an answer to both, I might oppose experience. Sin is no where by any so opposed, virtue no where so sincerely cultivated, as among those who sincerely receive the doctrine of *satisfaction*, and believe the utmost as to the *inability* of man in his present fallen case, without supernatural assistance, and gracious acceptance, to please God. Dare the Deists compare with them in this respect? If they should, I know what would be the issue, if the judge had conscience or honesty. A Socrates, Seneca or Plato, deserves not to be named in the same day with the meanest serious Christian, that believes these doctrines, either with respect to *piety* toward God, or *duty* toward man.

But as to the first charge, I say the ground of it is false; the query is disingenuous and deceitful. The ground of it is a supposition, that revelation excludes the necessity of repentance. This is manifestly false: Both Herbert and Blount knew it to be false; and could not but do so, if ever they read the Bible. And the query comparing revelation upon this known misrepresentation, with natural religion, is shamefully disingenuous. Let the query be, Whether it is more favorable to sin, to say, it is not to be pardoned without a satisfaction to justice by Christ, and repentance upon

* Blount Rel. Laici, pag. 91. 92.

our part, as revelation teaches; or, that upon our repentance merely, God is obliged to pardon it, as the Deists say? Now, I leave it to the Deists to answer this.

As to the second charge, revelation derogates nothing from virtue. It teaches indeed that our best actions are imperfect, and he knows not what perfection means, or what is required thereto, that will deny it. It teaches that *they who are in the flesh cannot please God.* It talks at another rate than Herbert, of the condition of sinful man, as to acceptance with God. He gives him a direction, "*Cum bonum pro virili præstas, mercedem a bonitate illa suprema pete, exige, habe; quo pacto revera sapies.*"* That is, "Manfully perform your duty as you can, and (whatever sin remain) ask, demand, and have your reward. This is the way to be truly wise." This petulent advice the scripture does not justify, and sober reason reprobates. Where sin intervenes, whatever the sinner does, in way of obedience, I conceive it will be as good wisdom as our author teaches him, to be very sober with his *demands.* But to return: Revelation, by teaching man's inability, doth not hinder him from virtue; but takes him off from his own strength, which would fail him in the performance, and leads him where he may get strength, and where innumerable persons have got strength to perform duty acceptably; and it points to the only ground, whereon sinful and imperfect obedience can be accepted with, or expect a reward from God.

Query VIII. "Whether speaking good words, thinking good thoughts, and doing good actions, be not the just exercise of a man's life? Or that without embracing the foresaid five principles or fundamentals, it be impossible to keep peace among men, that God may be well served?" Thus Blount.† This is Herbert's seventh and last query, and he only adds one clause to it, wanting here; "Whether the layman may not spend his time better in those exercises mentioned, than if he employed it in deciding controversies he does not understand."‡

The supposed necessity of the layman perplexing himself with controversies, at which Herbert here aims, in case he see meet to embrace revelation, we have above weighed and cast. But as to the query itself, it is utterly impertinent. For this is the question they should have proposed, "Whether their religion is sufficient to bring a man to these just exercises, and to maintain peace in society?" And not as they propose it, "Whether these exercises be in themselves good?" which nobody denies: let this be the question, and we answer negatively. For this we have given sufficient reasons above.

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* Herbert de Veritate, pag. 108.

† Herb. Rel. Laici, Appendix.

‡ Blount Rel. Laici page 92.

Query IX. "Whether the foresaid five principles do not best "agree with the precepts given in the ten commandments, and "with the two precepts of Jesus Christ, *viz.* To love God above "all, and our neighbour as ourselves? as well as with the words "of St. Peter, That in every nation he that feareth God, and work-eth righteousness is accepted of God."*

This query is the same with Herbert's seventh and last persuasive to Deism, which we have answered above. It is falsely supposed that revelation teaches, that the knowledge of the ten commands, or Christ's summary of them, is sufficient to salvation. Yea, revelation teaches expressly, that no man can practice them without grace from Christ, and that there is no other way of salvation but by faith in him. Again, it is falsely supposed, that the agreement of these articles with (that is to say, their not contradicting) these commands, proves them a sufficient religion. This argument, if it proves any thing, proves too much; for it will prove any one of them alone to be sufficient. If the Deists mean that their five articles, not only are not inconsistent with, *but sufficient* to bring men the length required by the ten commands, our Lord's summary of them, or *to fear God and work righteousness*, as Cornelius did: I answer negatively to the question, they can bring no man to this. Cornelius, of whom Peter speaks, had embraced the Old Testament revelation. What Peter speaks of men *of all nations being accepted with God*, relates to the discovery God had made to him of his design to admit men of all nations promiscuously to acceptance with him through the gospel revelation: And consequently, that the opinion hitherto received by Peter and other Jews, of the continued confinement of revealed religion and its privileges to Israel, was a mistake. So that this place helps not the Deists, if it is not cut off from its scope and cohesion, or interpreted without respect to it. This way of interpretation of scripture is not safe. I know not where Mr. Blount learned it; but I can tell him where there is a precedent of it—Matt. iv. And if the Deists have a mind to follow that precedent, they shall not be followed by me.

Query X. "Whether the doctrine of faith can by human reason "be supposed or granted to be infallible, unless we are infallibly as-"sured, that those who teach this doctrine do know the secret coun-"sels of God."†

To this I answer, That I am sufficiently secured as to the infallible certainty of the doctrine, if I have received the scriptures upon the ground above-mentioned, without supposing any who now teach it, to have any further acquaintance with the secret counsels of of God, than the word gives them.

* Blount, ib. page 92, 93.

† Blount, Rel. Laici, pag. 93.

Query XI. "Whether all things in the scriptures, (besides the "moral part, which agrees with our five principles) such as pro- "phecy, miracles and revelations, depending on the history, may "not be so far examined, as to be made appear by what authority "they are or may be received?"*

I answer, Revelation, in all its parts, is capable to stand the test of the strictest trial, provided it be just, and be managed as becomes it. But I must tell the Deists one thing in their ear, That if the scriptures once evince themselves to be from God, by sufficient evidence, they are obliged, upon their peril, to receive all that it teaches them, though they cannot prove it by reason; nay, nor explain it. But what if any revealed doctrine be contrary to reason? Upon the foregoing supposition, this query cannot be excused of blasphemy, but is highly impertinent and unreasonable.

Query XII. "Whether in human reason any one may, or ought "to be convinced by *one single testimony*, so far as to believe things "contrary to, or besides reason?"†

One single testimony is writ in a different character in the query, perhaps to give us to understand, that by it is meant the testimony of the revealer, *God*. And it cannot reasonably be understood of any other: For upon no other *single testimony* save that of *God*, is an assent to revelation demanded, or pleaded for, by those he opposes.

This being premised, I say this query consists, and is made up of three as impious suppositions as can enter the thoughts of any of the sons of men; besides that they are mutually destructive of one another. 1. It supposes that the one single testimony of God is not a sufficient warrant for believing whatever he shall reveal. 2. It supposes that a revelation come from God may contain things really contradictory to our reason. 3. It supposes that the single testimony of God is not a sufficient ground to believe things that are besides our reason, though they be not contrary to it, that is, truths, which we cannot prove by reason, or about which there are some difficulties that we cannot solve. Take these three impious suppositions out of the query, and it has no difficulty in it. If once we suppose a revelation to be from God, we must lay aside the second supposition as impossible, *viz.* That it can contain *any thing really contrary to reason*. Set aside this, which makes the query *felo de se*, destroy itself, and let the question be proposed, Whether we may believe upon the *single testimony of God* whatever does not really contradict our reason, though it contains some difficulties, which we cannot solve? And then I say, it is impious to deny it.

Query XIII. And lastly, "Whether, if it were granted they had "revelations, I am obliged to accept of another's revelation for the

* Blount's Rel. Laici, pag. 93. † Ibid. pag. 94.

" ground of my faith? Especially if it doth any way oppose these " five articles, that are grounded upon the law of nature, which is " God's universal *magna charta*, enacted by the All-wise and Su- " preme Being, from the beginning of the world, and therefore not " to be destroyed or altered by every whistling proclamation of an " enthusiast."*

This query is of the same alloy with the former. To it we answer shortly, The Christian revelation, (in others we are not concerned) exhibits matters of universal concernment, upon evidence of their divinity, capable to satisfy those who now live, as well as those to whom they were originally made; and so are impertinently called *another's* revelation. And we are obliged to receive it as the ground of our faith, and rule of our practice as much as they. The supposition that is added, that it contains doctrines or precepts contrary to the law of nature, is impious and false. What he adds further about the "whistling proclamations of enthusiasts," if it is not applied to the sacred writers, we are not concerned in it. If it is applied to them, *First*, It is false, that they taught any thing contrary to the law of nature. *Secondly*, It is impious to call them, in way of contempt, *enthusiasts*; or, at least, it is intolerably bold for any man to call them such, before he has proven it; which he never did, nor will all the Deists on earth ever be able to do. *Thirdly*, It was rude and unmannerly to treat them with so much contempt, especially without argument proving the charge, whom the whole authority of the land, all the persons vested with it, and the body of the people, respect as men infallibly directed of God. *Fourthly*, It was disingenuous to treat them thus, after such pretensions as our author had made of respect to them, in this and his other books.

Finally, Mr. Blount, instead of a fourteenth query, concludes with the testimony of Justin Martyr, as probative of his point. His words run thus, "Finally, submitting my discourse to my im- " partial and judicious reader, I shall conclude with the saying of " Justin Martyr, *Apol. cont. Triphon*, page 83. " That all those " who lived according to the rule of reason, were Christians, not- " withstanding that they might have been accounted as Atheists; " such as among the Greeks were Socrates, Hieraclitus, and the " like; and among the Barbarians, Abraham and Azarias: For " all those who lived, or do now live, according to the rule of reason, " are Christians, and in an assured quiet condition."†

As to the testimony of Justin Martyr, it is not probative with us; though we honor the fathers, yet we do not think ourselves obliged to submit to all their dictates. This is said, but not proven by him, either by scripture or reason. And I fear not to say,

* Blount's Rel. Laici, pag. 94. † Blount's Rel. Laici, page 94, 95.

It is more than he or any other can prove. Abraham is impertinently classed amongst those who wanted revelation; Socrates and Hieraclitus, in so far as they lived according to reason, are assuredly praise-worthy, and upon this account are not to be reckoned Atheists. That they were Christians, I flatly deny. Nor can it be proven from scripture or reason, *that their condition is assuredly quiet.* And further than this I am not concerned to pass any judgment about their state at present: What it is *that day will manifest.*

END OF THE INQUIRY.

AN

ESSAY,

CONCERNING THE

NATURE OF FAITH;

OR,

THE GROUND UPON WHICH

FAITH ASSENTS TO THE SCRIPTURES:

WHEREIN

THE OPINION OF THE RATIONALISTS ABOUT IT, IS PROPOSED, AND EXAMINED, ESPECIALLY AS IT IS STATED BY THE LEARNED MR. LOCKE, IN HIS BOOK ON HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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AN ESSAY, &c.

CHAP. I.

Containing some general Remarks concerning Knowledge, Faith, and particularly divine Faith, and that both as to the faculty and actings thereof.

ALL knowledge is commonly, and that not unfitly, referred to the understanding or intellectual power of the mind of man, which is conversant about truth. Our assent to, or persuasion of any truth is founded, either 1. Upon the immediate perception of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, and so is called *intuitive knowledge.* Or 2. It results from a comparison of our ideas with some immediate ones, which helps us to discern their agreement or disagreement; and this goes under the name of *rational knowledge.* Or 3. It leans upon the information of our senses, and this is *sensible knowledge.* Or 4. It depends upon the testimony of credible witnesses. And this is FAITH.

Faith again, if it is founded upon the testimony of angels, may be termed *angelical;* if on the testimony of men, *human;* and if it is founded on the testimony of God, it is called *divine faith:* It is of this last we design to discourse, as what particularly belongs to our present purpose.

When we speak of divine faith, we either mean the faculty or power whereby we assent unto divine testimony; or the assent given by that power. Both are

signified by that name, and faith is promiscuously used for the one or the other.

Faith, as it denotes the faculty, power or ability of our minds to perceive the evidence of, and assent to divine testimony, is again either *natural* or *supernatural*. That naturally we have a faculty capable of assenting in some sort to divine testimony, is denied by none, so far as I know. But that ability whereby we are at least habitually fitted, disposed and enabled to assent in a due manner to, and receive with a just regard, the testimony of God, no man by nature has. This is a supernatural gift.

Several questions I know are moved concerning this ability. It belongs not to my subject, neither doth my inclination lead me to dip much in them at present. I shall only suggest the few remarks ensuing.

1. It seems unquestionably clear, that man originally had a power, ability or faculty capable of perceiving, discerning and assenting to divine revelations upon their proper evidence: For it is plain, that God did reveal himself to man in innocency, and that he made man capable of converse with himself. But if such a faculty, as this we speak of, had been wanting, he had neither been capable of those revelations, nor fitted for converse with God.

2. It may most convincingly be made out, that all our faculties have suffered a dreadful shock, and are mightily impaired by the entrance of sin, and the corruption of our nature thereon ensuing; and particularly our understandings are so far disabled, especially in things pertaining unto God, that we cannot in a due manner, perceive, discern or entertain divine revelations upon their proper evidence, unto the glory of God, and our own advantage, unless our natures are supernaturally renewed. But this, notwithstanding, the faculty of assenting to divine testimony is not quite lost, though it is impaired and rendered unfit for performing its proper work in a due manner. I know none who asserts, that any of

our faculties were entirely lost by the fall.* In renovation our faculties are renewed, but there is no word of implanting new ones. It is certain, unrenewed men, such as Balaam and others, have had revelations made to them, and did assent to those revelations. Nor is it less clear, *that the devils believe and tremble.*

3. Whether men, in a state of nature, whose minds are not renewed, may not so far discern and be affected by the characters and evidences of God impressed upon divine revelations, particularly the scriptures, where those evidences shine brightly, as thereby to be obliged, and actually drawn to give some sort of assent into the testimony of God, I shall not positively determine: Though the affirmative seems probable to me. The impress of a Deity is no less evident on the scriptures than his other works. *He has magnified this word above all his name.* Besides, I do not see, how the very faculty itself can be thought to remain, if it is not capable of discerning any thing of God, where he gives the most full and convincing evidence of himself, as unquestionably he doth in the scriptures. Nor do I doubt but multitudes of sober persons, trained up within the church, and thereby drawn to a more attentive and less prejudicial perusal of the scripture revelation, do, upon sundry occasions, find their minds affected with the evidence of God in them, and thereby are drawn to assent to them as his word, though not in a due manner, and that even where they remain strangers unto a work of renovation. And I am sure, if it is so, it will leave the rejectors of the scriptures remarkably without excuse.

4. Whether some transient act of the Spirit of God is always necessary upon the mind, to draw forth even such an assent, as that last mentioned, I shall not determine; that in some cases it is so, is not to be doubted. The faith of temporary believers undoubtedly requires such an action as its cause, and where any thing of this evidence affects the minds of persons, at present deep-

* "We cannot conceive how reason should be prejudiced by the advancement of the rational faculties of our souls with respect unto their exercise toward their proper objects; which is all we assign unto the work of the Holy Spirit in this matter." *Dr. Owen on the Spirit, Preface*, page 9.

ly prejudiced, as they were, who were sent to apprehend Christ, and went away under a conviction, *that never man spake as he did*; there such a transient work of the Spirit of God seems necessary to clear their minds of prejudices, and make them discern the evidences of a Deity: But whether it is so in other cases, I shall not conclude positively.

5. But were it granted, That faith, that is, the faculty or power of believing, which is nothing else save the mind of man considered as a subject capable of assenting to testimony, still remains; and that though wofully impaired, weakened and disabled, it yet continues in so far able for its proper office or work, that either by the assistance of some transient operation of God's Spirit, breaking in some measure the power of its prejudices, and fixing it to the consideration of its proper object, or even without this, upon a more sedate, sober, less prejudiced observation, it may, though less perfectly, perceive the impress and evidences of God appearing in the revelations he makes of himself, and that thereon it may be actually so affected, as to give some sort of assent, and reach some conviction, that it is God who speaks: Were, I say, all this granted, it will amount to no great matter; since it is certain, that every sort of faith or assent to divine testimony, is not sufficient to answer our duty, obtain acceptance with God, and turn to our salvation. Nor is it so much of our concernment to inquire after that sort of faith which fails of answering these ends; and therefore I shall dip no further into any questions about any faith of this sort, or our ability for it.

6. It is more our interest to understand what that faith is, which God requires us to give to his *word*, which he will accept of, and which therefore will turn to our salvation; and whence we have the power and ability for this faith. Of these things therefore we shall discourse at more length in the next chapter designed to that end

CHAP. II.

Wherein the Nature of that Faith, which in Duty we are obliged to give to the Word of God, our obligation to, and our ability for answering our Duty, are inquired into.

WE have above insinuated, and of itself it is plain, that every sort of faith or assent to divine testimony answers not our duty, nor will amount to that regard which we owe to the authority and truth of God, when he speaks, or writes his mind to us. We must therefore, in the first place, inquire into the nature of that faith which will do so. Nor is there any other way wherein this may better be cleared, than by attending to the plain scripture accounts of it.

Now, if we look into the scriptures, we find, 1. The apostle Paul, 1 Thess. ii. 13. when he is commending the Thessalonians, and blessing God on their behalf, gives a clear description of that faith which is due unto the word of God. *For this cause also*, says he, *thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men; but (as it is truth) the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe.* If we advert to this description, we cannot but see these things in it, *First*, That some special sort of assent is here intended. The Thessalonians did not think it enough to give such credit, or yield such an assent as is due to the word of men, even the best of men. *Secondly*, In particular it is plain, that such an assent is intended as some way answers the unquestionable firmness of the testimony of the God of truth, which is the ground whereon it leans. *Thirdly*, It is obvious, that somewhat more is intended than a mere assent, of whatsoever sort it is: The words plainly import such an assent, or receiving of the word of God, as is attended with that reverence, submission of soul, re-

signation of will and subjection of conscience, that is due to God.

This the use of the word elsewhere in scripture strongly pleads for, and the manner wherein the apostle expresses himself here is sufficient to convince any man that no less is intended. 1. Less than this would scarce have been a ground for the apostle's *thanksgiving* to God, and for his doing this *without ceasing*. And indeed we find that this expression elsewhere used imports not only people's assent to, but their consent and approbation of the word of God; yea, and their embracing in practice the gospel, Acts viii. 14. and xi. 1. 2. We are told Heb. xi. 1. that is *the evidence of things not seen.*—ελεγχος, which we render *evidence*, signifies properly a *convincing demonstration*, standing firm against, and repelling the force of contrary objections. Faith then is such an assent as this, It is a firm conviction leaning upon the strongest bottom, able to stand against, and withstand the strongest objections. 3. The apostle more particularly describes the ground whereon it rests, or what that demonstrative evidence is, whereon this conviction is founded, and that both negatively and positively, 1 Cor. ii. 5. It stands not in the *wisdom of men*, but in *the power of God*. That is, it neither leans upon the eloquence, nor reasonings of men, but upon the powerful evidence of the Spirit's demonstration, as it is in the verse before.

Having given this short and plain account of faith from the scripture, we must in the next place prove, that in duty we are bound to receive the word of God with a faith of this sort. Nor will this be found a matter of any difficulty: For,

1. The scriptures hold themselves forth to us as the Oracles of God, which *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the spirit of God*, and wrote by divine inspiration, and *the Holy Ghost* is said *to speak to us by them*. Now the very light of nature teaches us, that when God utters oracles, speaks and writes his mind to us, we are in duty bound readily to assent, give entire credit to, and rely with the firmest confidence on the veracity of the speaker; and further, we are obliged to attend to what is spoken with the deepest veneration,

reverence and subjection of soul, and yield an unreserved practical compliance with every intimation of his mind.

2. The scriptures *were written* for this very end, *That we might so believe* them as to *have life by them*, John xx. 30. 31. And again, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. *The scriptures of the prophets according to the commandment of the everlasting God*, are said *to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.* Certainly then we are in duty obliged to yield this *obedience of faith.*

3. The most dreadful judgments, yea eternal ruin, and that of the most intolerable sort, are threatened against those, who do not thus receive the words of God from his servants, whether by word or writ, is no matter. *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city*, Matt. x. 14, 15. Accordingly we find the apostles preach the word at *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, Acts xiii. demand acceptance of it both of Jews and Gentiles, and upon their refusal, they testify against them in this way of the Lord's appointment, ver. 51. And all this severity they used without offering miracles, or any other proof for their doctrine, so far as we can learn, besides the authoritative proposal of it in the name of God.

4. We find the apostle, in the words above quoted, commending the Thessalonians for *receiving* the word in this manner, which is proof enough, that it was their duty to do so.

This much being clear, it remains yet to be inquired, Whence we have power or ability for yielding such an assent, whether it is natural or supernatural? Now if we consult the scripture upon this head, we find,

1. That this ability to believe and receive the things of God to our salvation and his glory, is expressly denied to unrenewed man, or man in his natural estate, 2 Thes. iii. 2. *All men have not faith:* 1 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, John viii. 47—

Ye therefore hear not God's words, because ye are not of God.

2. This is expressly denied to be of our selves, and asserted to be a supernatual gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

3. The production of it is expressly ascribed unto God. He it is that *fulfils* in his people *the work of faith with power*, 2 Thes. i. 11. He it is that gives them, that is, that enables them, *on the behalf of Christ to believe and suffer for his name*, Phil. i. 29. It is one of *the fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. v. 22. And of it Christ is the *author*, Heb. xii. 2. The further proof and vindication of this truth I refer to polemical writers.

But here possibly some may inquire, How it can be our duty thus to believe the scriptures, since we are not of ourselves able to do so? In answer to this, I shall only say, 1. The very light of nature shews, that it is our duty to yield perfect obedience, yet certain it is we are unable to answer to our duty. 2. The scriptures plainly require us to *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*, and with the same breath tells us, we must *have grace* to enable us to do it, Heb. xii. 28. 3. We have *destroyed* ourselves, and by our own fault impaired the powers God originally gave us, and brought ourselves under innumerable prejudices and other evils, whereby the entrance of light is obstructed: but this cannot reasonably prejudge God's right to demand credit to his word, on which he has impressed sufficient objective evidence of himself, which any one that has not thus faultily lost his eyes, may upon attention discern. 4. It is therefore our duty to justify God, blame ourselves, and wait in the way he has prescribed, for that *grace* which is necessary to *enable* us; and if thus we do his will, or at least aim at it, we have no reason to despair, but may expect in due time to be enabled to understand and know, whether these truths are of God, or they who spoke them did it of themselves, John vii. 17. Though yet we cannot claim this as what is our due.

From what has hitherto been discoursed, it is evident, that this faith, whereby we assent to the scripture, is su-

pernatural, or may be so called upon a two-fold account: 1. Because the power or ability for it, is supernaturally given; and 2. The evidence whereon it rests is supernatural.

In this chapter, we have directly concerned ourselves only in the proof of the first of these, viz. *That our ability thus to believe is supernaturally given;* and this has been the constant doctrine of the church of God, which we might confirm by testimonies of all sorts, did our designed brevity allow.*

But our modern Rationalists do resolutely oppose this. The author of a late Atheistical pamphlet, that truly subverts all religion, may be allowed to speak for all the rest; for he says no more than what they do assent to: He tells us, "That when once the mystery of "Christ Jesus was revealed, even human reason was "able to behold and confess it; not that grace had al-"tered the eye sight of reason, but that it had drawn the "object nearer to it."† To the same purpose speak the Socinians; Schlichtingius tells us, "Man endued "with understanding is no otherwise blind in divine "mysteries, than as he who hath eyes, but sits in the "dark: remove the darkness, and bring him a light and "he will see. The eyes of a man are his understand-"ing, the light is Christ's doctrine." To the same purpose doth the paradoxical *Belgic Exercitator,* that sets up for philosophy as the interpreter of the scriptures, express himself frequently. Nor is his pretended answerer *Volzogius* differently minded; though he is not so constant to his opinion as the other.‡

But these gentlemen may talk as they please, we are not obliged to believe them in this matter. The scriptures plainly teaching us, that our minds are blind, our understandings impaired and obstructed in discerning the evidence of truth, by prejudices arising from the en-

* See Mr. Wilson's Scripture's genuine Interpreter asserted. Appen. page 4, 5, &c.

† Treatise on Human Reason, page 58, published 1674, and to the credit of the church of England, with an Imprimatur, quoted by Mr. Wilson, ubi supra, page 13.

‡ Wilson's ibid, page 7, 12.

mity of the will, and depravity of the affections. Nor were it difficult to demonstrate from scripture, that no man can believe, or understand the word of God aright, till, 1. The spirit of God repair this defect of the faculty, or *gives us an understanding*, 1 John v. 20. 2. Break the power of that enmity that rises up against the truths of God as foolishness. 3. Cure the disorder of our affections, that blinds our minds. And 4. Fix our minds, otherwise vain and unstable, to attend to what God speaks, and the evidence he gives of himself. But this is not what we principally design, and therefore we shall insist no longer upon this head: Our present question is not about our ability or power to believe, but the *ground* whereon we do believe. What has been spoken of the former hitherto, is only to prepare the way for the consideration of the latter, to which we now proceed.

CHAP. III.

The Ground, or the formal Reason, whereon Faith assents to the Scriptures is inquired after; the Rationalist's Opinion about it, and particularly as stated by Mr. Locke in his Book on Human Understanding, is proposed and considered.

THOUGH we have spoken somewhat concerning our ability to believe the word of God, and the supernatural rise thereof, in the preceding chapter; wherein we have offered our thoughts of that which goes under the name of *subjective light*; yet this is not the question mainly intended in these papers. That which we aim more particularly to inquire after, is the *ground* whereon the mind thus subjectively enlightened, or by the spirit of God disposed, fitted and enabled to discern and assent to divine revelations, *builds* its assent, and wherein it *rests satisfied*, or acquiesces.

The question then before us is this, What is that *ground* whereon, or reason which moves and determines us to receive the *scriptures as the word of God?* What is the *formal reason* whereon our faith rests? Or what is the proper answer to that question, *Wherefore do ye believe the scriptures to be the word of God, and receive truths therein proposed as the word of God, and not of man?*

It is in general owned by all, who believe the scriptures to be a divine revelation, that the authority, truth and veracity of God, who is truth itself, and can neither deceive, nor be deceived, is the ground whereon we receive and assent to propositions of truth therein revealed.

But this general answer satisfies not the question: For, though it is of natural and unquestionable evidence, that God's testimony is true, cannot but be so, and as such must be received; yet certain it is, that divine testimony abstractly considered, cannot be the

ground of our assent unto any truth in particular: But that whereon we must rest, and whereon our faith must lean, is, "The testimony of God to it, evidencing itself, "or as it gives evidence of itself unto the mind." The knot of the question then lies here, "What is that evi- "dence of God's speaking or giving testimony to truths "supernaturally revealed, whereby the mind is satisfied "that God is the revealer? Or when God speaks, or in- "timates any truth to us, how, or in what way doth he "evidence to us, that he is the revealer, what ground is "it whereon we are satisfied as to this precise point?"

Now whereas there are persons of three sorts, who may be called to assent to divine revelations, the question proposed may be considered with respect to each of them.

1. The question may be moved concerning those persons to whom the scripture revelations were originally made; and as to them it may be inquired, When God did reveal his mind unto the prophets, what was that *evidence*, what were those τεκμηρια or *certain signs*, whereby they were infallibly assured, that the propositions they found impressed upon their minds, were from God?

2. As to the persons to whom they did immediately reveal these truths, it may be questioned, What *evidences* they had to move them to *assent*, and give *faith* to those truths which were proposed to them as divine revelations? On what *ground* did they rest satisfied, that really they were so?

3. Whereas we, who now live, neither had these revelations made to us *originally*, nor heard them from the persons to whom they were so given; but being comprised and put together in the Bible, they are offered to us as a *divine revelation*, and we are in duty, upon pain of God's displeasure in case of refusal, called and required to believe, and assent to whatever is therein revealed, *as the word of God and not of man*; hereon it may be moved What is that evidence which *this book* gives of itself that it is of God, whereon our minds may rest assured that really it is so?

As to this question, in so far as it concerns the first sort of persons mentioned, we shall not dip much into

it; all I shall say is this, in the words of the judicious and learned Dr. Owen, "In the inspirations of the Ho- "ly Spirit, and his actings on the minds of holy men of "old, he gave them infallible assurance that it was him- "self alone by whom they were acted, Jer. xiii, 28. If "any shall ask by what τεκμηρια or infallible tokens they "might know assuredly the inspirations of the Holy "Spirit, and be satisfied with such a persuasion as was "not liable to mistake, that they were not imposed "upon? I must say plainly, That I cannot tell; for "these things whereof we have no experience."*

There is one thing dropt as to this matter by the ingenious Mr. Locke, that deserves some animadversion. Though he delivers nothing positively about those evidences which the prophets had, yet negatively he tells us, that the prophets' assurance did not at lest solely arise from the revelations themselves, or the operation of the Spirit impressing them upon their minds, which he calls the *internal light of assurance:* But that beside this, to satisfy them fully that those impressions were from God, *external signs* were requisite;† and this he endeavors to prove from their desiring *confirmatory signs*, as Abraham and others did; and from God's giving such signs undesired. To this purpose his appearing to Moses in the bush, is by our author taken notice of. As to the opinion itself, I look on it as highly injurious to the honor of divine revelation, and I take the ground whereon it is founded to be weak and inconclusive: For, 1. neither Mr. Locke, nor any for him, shall ever be able to prove, that these divinely inspired persons always required or got such *confirmatory signs* extrinsical to the revelation or inspiration itself; yea, it is manifest, that for most part they neither sought them nor got them. 2. When they did seek or get them, Mr. Locke cannot prove, that either God or they found them necessary for the present assurance of the person's own minds; as if that internal light of assurance, to use Mr. Locke's words, had not of

* Dr. Owen on the Spirit, Book 2. Chap. 1. §. 10. pag. 104.

† Human Understanding, Book 4. Chap. 12. §. 15. page 593. Edition 5th, 1706.

itself, while it abode, been sufficient to satisfy the mind fully, that it was God who was dealing with it, or revealing himself to it. It is plain, that other reasons of their desiring such signs may be assigned. When the matters revealed were things at a distance, which required some extraordinary out-goings of God's power to effectuate them, in that case they desired, and God condescended to grant to them some extraordinary signs, not to assure them that God was speaking unto them, but to strengthen their convictions of the sufficiency of God's power, for enabling to do what he required of them, if it was difficult, or accomplishing what he promised to them in defiance of the greatest opposition. Sometimes divine revelations were promises of things at a distance, that were not to be actually accomplished till after a long tract of time, and over many inconvenient obstructions; in this case they were obliged to believe these promises, and wait in the faith of them, even when that light, that first assured them, was gone, and such evidences or signs might be of use to them to adhere unto the assent formerly given upon that supernatural evidence, that at first accompanied the revelation. Such signs then might be of use to strengthen the remembrance of that first evidence, which they had when the revelations were first imparted to them. These and other reasons of a like nature might sufficiently account for their desiring these signs, and God's giving them: But as has been said, we intend not a determination or full decision of this question.

We shall only consider the question with respect unto the two last sort of persons. And as to those who heard, or had divine revelations immediately from inspired persons, our rational divines seem positive, that the evidence whereon they assented to what they delivered as the mind of God, consisted in, or did result from the miracles they wrought, and other external signs, or proofs, which they gave of their mission from God. Monsieur L'Clerk, in his Emendations and Additions to Hammond on the New Testament, gives us this gloss on 1 Cor. ii, 5. "Paul, says he, would have the Corinthians "believe him, not as a philosopher proposing probabili-"ties to them, but as the messenger of God, who had

" received commandment from him, to deliver to them " those truths which he preached, and, that he thus re- " ceived them, he did shew by the miracles he thus " wrought." And a little after he adds, " He whose faith " leans upon miracles wrought by God's power, his " faith is grounded upon the divine power, the cause of " these divine miracles." As to this opinion itself, I shall express myself more particularly just now: But as to Monsieur L'Clerc's inference from this text, he had no manner of ground for it. Let us but look into the verse before, and there we find the apostle telling the Corinthians, that in his preaching he avoided the *enticing words of man's wisdom*, and delivered his message in the *demonstration of the Spirit, and of power*. Upon the back of this 5th verse, he tells them, his design in doing so was, *that* their *faith* might *not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*, that is, on the powerful demonstration of the Spirit of God, mentioned in the foregoing verse. How Monsieur L'Clerc came to dream of miracles, and fetch them in here, while the scope and every circumstance of the text stood in the way of this exposition, I cannot divine; for nothing is more foreign and remote from the sense of this place. If the author had followed the old approved interpreter of scripture, I mean the scripture itself, and had looked into the foregoing verse and context, he had given us a more genuine account: But philosophy now set up for an interpreter, I had almost said a perverter, did certainly lead him into this violent and ridiculous gloss. But to come to the matter itself.

Miracles can be no other the ground of any assent, than as they afford ground for, or may be made use of as the medium of an argument, whereby the divine mission of the worker is concluded and proven. This then must be the opinion of these gentlemen, That they who heard the apostles or prophets, could not be satisfied in their minds, that what they said was divinely revealed, until they were convinced of it by proofs drawn from miracles or signs, wrought by the preacher; and that this is not merely my conjecture, is evident from the accounts we have of their opinions and hypothesis, where-

of this is reckoned as a principal one, that the mind of man being rational, cannot be moved but by a rational impression, that is, by the force of effectual reasons.* And to the same purpose we shall find Mr. Locke expressing himself by and by.

Upon this hypothesis, it is evident, 1. That if a Heathen came into a Christian assembly, and heard Paul preaching, or even Jesus Christ himself, if he had never seen them work any sign or miracle, he would not be obliged to believe their doctrine. 2. If the apostles preached to those among whom they wrought no miracles, gave no such outward signs, such persons could not be obliged to believe them, the evidence whereon such a belief is founded being denied. 3. They who heard them, and saw the miracles, could not be obliged to assent unto their doctrine, until by reasoning they would have time to satisfy themselves, how far natural causes might go towards the production of such effects, and how far these things, admitting them to be supernatural, could go toward the proof of this—that what they delivered was from God. 4. If there was any among them so dull, as not to be capable to judge of these nice points, I do not see how, upon these principles, they could be obliged to believe. These and the like are not strained consequences; for it is undeniable, that our obligation to believe arises from the proposal of due objective evidence; if this is wanting no man can be obliged to believe.

As to us who neither conversed with the inspired persons, to whom such revelations were originally given, nor saw the miracles they wrought, we are told by those Rationalists, That we have *historical proof*, that there were such persons, that they wrote these revelations which we now have, and that they wrought such miracles in confirmation of their mission and doctrine; and upon the evidence of these proofs we must rest, they will allow us no other bottom for our faith. Hence Monsieur Le' Clerc tells us, "That whatever faith is this "day in the world among Christians, depends upon the "testimony of men."

* Spanhem. Elench. Controversiarum, pag. 320. Edition 1694.

Among many who have embraced this opinion, Mr. Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, has declared himself to this purpose, and upon several accounts he deserves to be taken special notice of: I shall therefore represent faithfully and shortly his opinion, and the grounds whereon it is founded, and make such animadversions upon them, as may be necessary for clearing our way. His opinion you may take in the ensuing propositions.

1. When he is speaking of the different grounds of assent, and degrees thereof, he says, "Besides those we "have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of proposi- "tions that challenge the highest degrees of our assent "upon bare testimony, whether the thing proposed "agree or disagree with common experience and the "ordinary course of things, or not. The reason where- "of is, because the testimony is of such an one, as can- "not deceive or be deceived, and that is of God him- "self. This carries with it assurance beyond doubt, evi- "dence beyond exception. This is called by a peculiar "name, *revelation*, and our assent to it, *faith*: Which as "absolutely determines our minds, and as perfectly ex- "cludes all wavering as our knowledge itself."*

2. But notwithstanding, he tells us in the very same paragraph, "That our assurance of truths upon this testimony," or to give his own words, "Our assent can "be rationally no higher than the evidence of its being "a revelation, and that this is the meaning of the ex- "pressions it is delivered in." That is, as he himself explains it, "If the reasons proving it to be a revelation "are but probable, our assurance amounts but unto a "probable conjecture."

He distinguishes betwixt *traditional* and *original revelation*. By the last of these, says he, "I mean that first "impression which is made immediately by God on the "mind of any man, to which we cannot set any bounds; "and by the other, those impressions delivered over to "others in words, and the ordinary ways of conveying "our conceptions one to another."† And afterwards

* Human Understand. Book 4. Cap. 18. §. 14. pag. 564, 565.
† Ibid. §. 3. pag. 582.

speaking of *immediate* or *original revelation*, he tells us, "That no evidence of our faculties by which we re-"ceive such revelations, can exceed, if equal, the cer-"tainty of our intuitive knowledge."* And in the preceding paragraph, speaking of *traditional revelation*, he tells us, "That whatsoever truth we come to the clear "discovery of, from the knowledge and contemplation of "our own ideas, will always be more certain to us, than "those, which are conveyed by traditional revelation."†

4. He tells us, "That true light in the mind can be "no other but the evidence of the truth of any propo-"sition," and hereon he proceeds to tell us, "That there "can be no other evidence or light in the mind, about "propositions that are not self-evident, save what arises "from the clearness and validity of those proofs upon "which it is received: And he adds, "That to talk of "any other light is to put ourselves in the dark, or in "the power of the prince of darkness."‡

5. In the next paragraph he tells us plainly, That there is no way of knowing any revelation to be from God, but by "rational proofs: or some marks in which reason cannot be mistaken."§

6. In this next paragraph he tells what before we have taken notice of, That the internal light of assurance which the prophets had, was not sufficient to testify, that the truths impressed on their minds were from God, without other signs.‖

Thus far of Mr. Locke's opinion, which in sum amounts to this, "That even the original revelations, had not in them intrinsic evidence, sufficient to assure them on whom such impressions were made, that they were from God; that other signs were necessary to satisfy them; and that others who received such revelations at second hand, not from God immediately, but from inspired persons, have no other evidence to ground their assent on, besides that which results from arguments drawn from those signs, whereby they did confirm their mission; and that we have no evidence who

* Human Understand. Book 4. Cap. 18. §. 5. pag. 583.
† Ibid. Book 4. Cap. 18. §. 4. pag. 582. ‡ Ibid. Book 4. Cap. 19. §. 13.
§ Ibid. §. 14. ‖ Ibid. §. 15.

saw not these signs, besides that of the historical proofs, whereby it is made out, that the persons who wrote the traditional revelations we have, wrought such signs in confirmation of their mission from God."

It is worth our while to dwell a little here, and more narrowly consider Mr. Locke's thoughts, and the grounds of his opinion; I shall therefore offer a few observations on this doctrine.

I. Mr. Locke in his first proposition, speaks very honorably of divine faith. As to the assent or act of faith, he says, "That it is an assent of the highest degree; assurance without doubt." As to the ground of it, he says, "That it is such as challenges an assent of the highest degree;" that it is "evidence beyond exception." These are goodly words. *He has spoken well in all that he has said.* I wish that his meaning and heart may be found as good as his words. *All is not gold that glitters.* Let us then look a little more narrowly into his meaning.

To find it out, we shall suppose that God, as no doubt he did, does reveal immediately to Paul this proposition, *Jesus is the Son of God.* Here is a revelation: By Paul it is assented to. Well here is faith. Now in his believing this proposition, he may be said to assent to three things—That what God says is true—That Jesus is the Son of God—and, That God says this to Paul.

Now, I ask Mr. Locke, or any of our rationalists that are of his mind, To which of these three is it that Paul assents, with an assent "of the highest degree," and of which he has "evidence beyond exception?"

1. Could Mr. Locke only mean, that we have the highest assurance of this general verity, *That God's testimony is infallibly true?* No, sure. For the assent to this truth is not an act of faith, but of intuitive knowledge. The truth itself is not a truth here divinely revealed, but of natural evidence. This is not so much in this instance expressly assented, as supposed known.

2. Doth Mr. Locke mean, that we assent to this proposition, *That Jesus is the son of God?* Had Paul "assurance beyond doubt" and "evidence beyond excep-

tion," of this? But surely Mr. Locke knew that Paul, on this supposition, does not at all assent to the proposition, *Jesus is the Son of God absolutely*, but *as it is revealed*. Well then, all the evidence that Paul has to ground his assent upon, is the evidence of this, *That God says so to him*. If then the evidence of God's saying so to him is not such as "challenges an assent of the highest degree," Paul cannot have the "highest degree of assurance" of that proposition, the faith whereof leans entirely upon his assurance of this, *That God has revealed it*. For as Mr. Locke says very truly in that same paragraph, "Our assurance of any particular truth, that "is, the matter revealed, can never rise higher in degree "than our assurance of this, that it is revealed." If then Paul has not "evidence beyond exception," that God reveals the proposition we speak of to him, he can never have such assurance of the truth of the proposition materially considered. Wherefore,

3. Did Mr. Locke think in this case, that Paul would have evidence beyond exception, challenging the highest degree of assent, and thereon assurance beyond doubt, or of the highest degree, of this, that God did in very deed say to Paul, *That Jesus is the Son of God*; or of this truth, *That Jesus is the Son of God as revealed*. It is the assent to this proposition that in proper speaking is faith. The assent to the general proposition abovementioned, is not an act of faith at all. Nor is the assent to the proposition revealed, materially considered, an act of faith. Faith in this case, is only the assent to that proposition *as revealed*, or to the *revelation of it*. If, then, Paul has not the highest evidence for, and thereon the highest assurance of this, *That God says this to him*, his faith can never be said to be the highest degree of assurance or assent. Thisthen Mr. Locke must mean, or he means nothing. But yet I suppose he scarce thought so: For, 1. He tells us afterwards, that we can have no evidence for receiving any truth revealed, that can exceed, if equal, the evidence we have for our intuitive knowledge. If we have not then evidence, equal at least to that which we have for our intuitive knowledge, for our belief of God's being the revealer, or that he speaks

to us, we cannot have the highest degree of assurance. 2. He afterwards tells us, that we have no evidence for this, that this or that truth is revealed to us by God, but that which results from reason or arguments, drawn from marks, whereby we prove that God is the speaker; but Mr. Locke owns, that the evidence of all our reasonings, is still short of that which we have for our intuitive knowledge. Now methinks this quite overthrows Mr. Locke's goodly concession. With what consistency with truth or himself, Mr. Locke wrote at this rate, is left to others to judge.

II. Whatever there is in this concession yielded in favor of faith, Mr. Locke afterwards takes care that we who now live shall not be the better for it: For afterwards he tells us plainly, "That whatsoever truth we "come to the clear discovery of, from the knowledge "and contemplation of our ideas, will always be more cer- "tain to us, than those which are conveyed by tradi- "tional revelation." We have no revelation at this day, but that which Mr. Locke calls traditional. And here it is plain, that Mr. Locke thinks that our certainty of any truth we have from this, is inferior in degree to any sort of natural knowledge, whether intuitive, rational or sensible.

III. It is manifest, that the foundation of all is, what Mr. Locke teaches in the fourth position above mentioned; wherein he tells us, "That to talk of any other light "in the mind, beside that of self-evidence, reason, and "sense, is to put ourselves in the dark." I have added this last, "the light of sense," because Mr. Locke, though he mentions it not here, yet elsewhere he admits it. That we may understand Mr. Locke's assertion exactly, it must be observed, that writers, when they treat of this subject, usually take notice of a two-fold light. There is *subjective light*, by which is meant either our ability to perceive, discern, know and judge of objects, or our actual knowledge, assent, &c. Again there is *objective light*, by which they mean that evidence whence our knowledge results, whereon it is founded, and which determines the mind to assent or dissent. Now it is of this last that Mr. Locke is treating in his chapter of *En-*

thusiasm, from whence this proposition is taken. And his opinion is this, That there is a threefold objective light, which is a real and just ground for the mind to assent on. There is, *first, self-evidence*, which is the ground of our intuitive knowledge, resulting from the obvious agreement or disagreement of our ideas, appearing upon first view or intuition, when they are compared. *Secondly*, There is *rational light*, or the evidence resulting from arguments, wherein the agreement or disagreement of our ideas is cleared by assuming intermediate ideas, by the help of which our mind is cleared, as to what judgment it is to pass. *Thirdly*, There is the *light of sense*, or the evidence resulting from impressions made on our minds by the intervention and means of our organs of sense.

But besides these, he admits of no other objective light or evidence, that may be a just ground of assent; and adds, "That to talk of any other, is to put our-"selves in the dark; yea, in the power of the prince of "of darkness, and turn to enthusiasts."

This grape must be pressed, that we may taste its juice, how it relishes. In the consideration of this doctrine delivered by Mr. Locke, we shall not at present inquire whether it really does not preclude all place for faith, properly so called. This in the issue will be further cleared.

But whatever there is as to this, if Mr. Locke's doctrine hold, certain it is, that either faith, if there is such a thing, must be founded on one of those three grounds of assent, or sorts of objective light, or it is altogether irrational. For an assent not founded on, and to which we are not determined by real objective evidence, is brutish, irrational, and really enthusiastic, as being no reason or ground: And besides these three sorts of grounds, Mr. Locke admits of none. Faith, therefore, must be founded either on one or the other of them, or it must want all reason for it.

Further, it is to be observed, That Mr. Locke's taking self-evidence for that which is immediately perceptible without the intervention of any intermediate ideas, by the natnral power of our intellectural faculties, not as-

sisted, renewed, elevated and influenced by any supernatural influence; and taking sensible evidence for that which is conveyed by the intervention of bodily organs, from corporeal substances, cannot be thought to make either of these the ground of faith to the testimony of God. And therefore it must have no reason save that rational evidence, which makes the middle sort of objective light. But I need not spend time in proving this, since it is no more than what is taught us in the fifth proposition abovementioned.

This opinion thus far explained is indeed the sum, and contains the force of what is pleaded, or, for ought I know, can be pleaded for the judgment of our Rationalists. We shall therefore weigh the matter more seriously, and proceed by some plain steps in the ensuing propositions.

1. "If good and solid reasons can be produced for "proof of another sort of objective light or evidence, "besides those three mentioned by Mr. Locke, it must "be admitted, though we should not be able to give a "satisfying account of its nature, and other concern-"ments."

(1.) This I believe was never denied in the general as to other things, by any person of judgment, adverting to, and understanding what is said, and why it then should be refused in this case, I can see no ground.

(2.) If any has ever in general denied this in words, I am sure every man in fact admits it. Who is he that receives not many truths, that admits not the being of many things, upon good proof, from their causes, effects, inseparable adjuncts, &c. of the nature of which he can give no satisfying account? We all own the mutual influence of our souls and bodies upon one another, upon the proofs we have from the effects: But whoever has understood the manner, how the soul operates on the body, or the body upon it? Instances of this sort are innumerable.

(3.) Sufficient proofs must always determine our assent; and if there are such in this case, it is unreasonable to refuse it.

(4.) If we have sufficient reasons to convince us, that there is a fourth sort of objective light distinct from those three admitted by Mr. Locke, and only deny it because we understand not, or cannot give a clear account of its nature, I cannot tell, but on this same ground we shall reject, and be obliged to refuse these three sorts admitted by him, for the very same reason. Mr. Locke perhaps has done as much as any man to explain them: but were he alive, I believe he would be as ready to own as any, that he has been far from satisfying himself, or offering what may fully clear others as to the nature of these things, Wherein evidence consists? What is it? What is self-evidence, or that evidence which is the grounnd of our sensible or rational knowledge? How they operate and influence the assent? All his accounts are only descriptions taken from causes, effects are the like. But what objective light or evidence is, wherein it really consists, (and the like may be said of the rest) is as much a mystery as it was before, when he tells us, that self-evidence *(ex. gr.)* is that which is immediately perceived without the intervention of intermediate ideas. Here I learn, that it is not rational evidence, that reqtires such intermediate ideas. But this is all I can learn, unless it be, that it is perceptible by the mind, that is, it is evidence. But what evidence is, I am yet to learn. I think this proposition is plain.

2. "A fourth sort of objective evidence, different from "those three assigned by Mr. Locke, is not impossible."

(1.) If any say it is, it lies upon him to prove it. That Mr. Locke, or millions more, observed no such light in their minds, found themselves determined to assent by no other objective evidence or light, will not prove it impossible; yea, will not prove that actually there is no such light; nay, will not prove, that there is no such light in their own minds. For Mr. Locke, though he observed as accurately the manner of his mind, its actings, as most men, yet might not observe it so, but that he possibly overlooked somewhat that passed there. And if really Mr. Locke did not assent upon other evidence to some things, though he observed it not, I doubt not but by this time he is sensible it was his loss that it was so. It

cannot be pretended, that it is impossible for want of a sufficient cause, while that God is in being, who is author of the three sorts of lights, that are admitted, and who is *the Father of lights*. Nor can it be pretended, that the members of this division stand contradictorily opposed to one another, as it is in this, Every being is *dependent* or *independent*.

(2.) If any will say yet, It is impossible there should be a fourth or a fifth sort of light or objective evidence, I shall desire him only to stay a while, and consider the *light of sense*. It is nothing else save "that evidence "that results from impressions made on our minds by "means of our organs of sense." Well, hereon I shall ask two questions.

First, Is it not possible for him who made those conveyances or organs of sense, to frame more such, quite different from those we already have, and by means of them impart to us other perceptions, and determine as to assent on the evidence of the impressions conveyed to our minds by these other senses? If it is possible, as I see not how rationally it can be questioned, here is at least a fourth sort of objective light determining our minds to assent, admitted as *possible*.

Secondly, Here I would inquire, Whether may not He, who, by these bodily organs we already have, impresses ideas upon our minds, and determines our assent to their agreement or disagreement, *immediately without the intervention of such organs*, makes impressions on our minds, whereby our assent or judgment may rationally be swayed? To deny this will look very odd and irrational to sober men, that have due thoughts of God. If it is admitted, we have here at least the *possibility* of another ground of assent, or objective light, acknowledged, different from those condescended on by Mr. Locke.

(3.) We that have the benefit of sight, have in our minds a sort of objective evidence or light, different from those which are born blind have. And why should it be then thought impossible that others may have in their minds an evidence that we have no experience of, and that it may be equally real, convincing, or more so than any that we have.

(4.) Mr. Locke grants, That there are *extraordinary ways* whereby the knowledge of truth may be imparted to men; that God sometimes illuminates by his Spirit the minds of men, with the knowledge of truths; that there is no bounds to be set to such divine impressions. Now if all this is so, why may there not be evidence of a different sort, resulting from such extraordinary impressions, illuminations, &c. allowed to be also possible?

(5.) Either God can reveal his mind so to man, as to give him the highest evidence or objective light that he speaks to him, who gets that revelation, or he cannot. If he can, then there is *possible* an objective evidence, and that of the highest sort, different from those three mentioned by Mr. Locke: for that it must be different is evident, because Mr. Locke in this case will allow no place for self-evidence, or that evidence we have in our intuitive knowledge, which he determines to be the highest degree of these three sorts he has admitted and owned. Speaking of immediate revelation, he says, "No evidence of our faculties, by which we receive "such revelations, can exceed, if equal, the certainty of "our intuitive knowledge, as we heard above." Since then this evidence of the highest degree, is different from that which we have in our intuitive knowledge, (if it is at all) it must be of a different sort from any of those three: For by concession, it is not self-evidence; and rational or sensible it is not, because these sorts of evidence are of a degree inferior to intuitive evidence;—If then it is evidence of the highest degree, since Mr. Locke will not admit it to be self-evidence, it must be none of the three: and so we have a fourth sort admitted possible. But if God cannot reveal his mind, so as to give the greatest objective evidence that he speaks, or is the revealer, then I say, it is plain, and follows unavoidably, that God's testimony can never have from man the *highest degree of assent*, which Mr. Locke above expressly acknowledged to be its due. It is in vain to say that God's testimony is infallible: for our assent to any truth upon God's testimony, as Mr. Locke truly says, can never rise higher, than the assurance we have of this, that really we have God's testimony, and take its meaning.

If then God cannot give us the highest evidence or objective light as to this, no truth he offers can have from us the highest degree of assent. To me this looks like blasphemy, to imagine, that God has made a rational creature, to whom he cannot so impart his mind as to give it such evidence as is absolutely necessary to lay a ground for entertaining his testimony with that respect, which is its unquestionable due. That his testimony is in itself infallible, will never make our assent of the highest degree, unless the evidence of his giving testimony is of the highest degree.

3. " We assert, That *de facto* there really is a sort of " objective evidence or light, different from that con- " descended on by Mr. Locke."

(1.) The prophets to whom immediate revelations were made, had objective evidence, or light sufficient to ground the highest assurance, that the truths impressed on their minds were from God. It is impious to deny it. But this Mr. Locke will not allow to be such evidence as we have in our intuitive knowledge; and all must confess, that it did not result from their outward senses; and that it was not grounded on reasonings from evidences, marks or signs, extrinsical to the revelations themselves, seems undeniable, or even from reasoning, and making inferences from what was intrinsical in the revelation. For, 1. We find not, that this persuasion came to them by such argumentation or reasoning. We can see no ground from any accounts we have in scripture to think, that they took this way to assure their own minds. Yea, 2. The scripture accounts of the way of their being convinced, seem all to import, that as God impressed the truths on their minds, so that immediately by that very impression, he fixed an indelible and firm conviction of his being the revealer. Again, 3. We see, that the evidence was so convincing as to bear down in them the force of the strongest reasonings and the clearest arguments that stood against it, as we see evidently in the case of Abraham; he is commanded to offer his son Isaac; if this command had not been impressed on his mind with an evidence, that God was the revealer, beyond what any reasoning upon signs and marks, and

I know not what, could pretend to, the strong plain arguments that lay against it, strengthened by a combination of the strongest natural affections, must have carried it. 4. If Abraham was convinced by such reasonings, that God revealed this, that this command was from God, is it not strange that he makes no mention of them, when it was so obvious, that it was liable to be questioned whether God could give such a command? But the truth of it is, it is obvious to any one that thinks, that nothing could prevail in this case, but the uncontrolable and irresistible evidence resulting from the very impression, whereby the command was revealed. But we wave any further consideration of this, which now we have no experience of.

(2.) Mr. Locke will admit, that the primitive Christians, who embraced the gospel, did it upon sufficient objective evidence. He is not a Christian who denies it. But he will not admit intuitive evidence in this case. And I shall, I hope, afterwards make it appear, that it was not on the evidence of such reasonings, as Mr. Locke talks of, that they embraced it.

(3.) The scriptures demand our assent, and offer no evidence but this of God's authority. And arguments are not insisted on to prove, that it is God that speaks; God calls us not to assent without objective evidence, and yet waves the use of such arguments as Mr. Locke would have to be the foundation of our faith. There must be therefore some objective light of a different sort supposed, that must be the ground of our assent. And that there really is so, the scriptures teach, as we shall see afterwards, when this proposition must be proven, and explained more fully.

(4.) Abstracting from what has been said, we have as good ground as can be desired, and as the nature of the thing admits, for believing there is really a light *distinct* from that mentioned by Mr. Locke. As to the persons who have it, this light evidences itself in the same way as the other sorts of intellectual light do. They are conscious of it, and find it has the same effect, determining the mind to assent, assuring it, and giving it rest in the full conviction of truth. As to others who want

it, they have such evidence as a blind man has, that there is such a thing as visible evidence. They have the concurring suffrage of persons sober, judicious and rational, who have given evidence of the greatest cautiousness in guarding against delusion, enthusiasm, and groundless imaginations. Besides, the effects peculiarly flowing from such a faith as leans on this foundation, gives evidence to it. But I cannot stay to prove this further at present.

4. "Though perhaps an account every way satisfying "cannot be given of the nature of this light, nor can "we so clearly see what it is, and wherein it consists, as "to make those who are unacquainted with it, under-"stand it, or have as exact a notion of it as they have, "whose experience satisfies them as to its reality: Yet "such an account may be given of it, as may secure it "against the imputation of unreasonableness, and un-"intelligibility." To this purpose, I shall only observe the few things ensuing.

(1.) That light or objective evidence, whereon we are obliged to believe, and all that are subjectively enlightened to believe the scriptures, and ground their assent, is such, that a more intelligible account by far may be given of it to those, who have no experience of it, than can be given of the objective evidence of visible objects to persons who have no experience of sight. To clear this,

(2.) It is to be observed, that in the writings of men, especially of some, who have any peculiarity of genius, and excel in any kind, we find such characters, marks and peculiar evidences of them, not only in the matter, but in the manner of expression, and way of delivering their thoughts: there is such a spirit, and somewhat so peculiar to themselves to be observed, that such as have any notion of their writings, cannot thereon avoid a conviction, that this or that book, though it bears not the author's name, or those other marks, whereon we depend as to our opinion of the authors of books, of whom we have no particular acquaintance, is yet written by such an author, the vestiges of whose peculiar spirit and genius run through, and are discernible in the strain of the

book. There are few men, who are acquainted with books, and read them with attention and judgment, who have not the experience of this. And hence we are frequently referred to this, as what may satisfy us, that books that bear such authors' names are genuine and truly theirs.* And it is found more convincing than the attestation of no incredible witnesses in many cases. Yet it must be confessed, that persons of the best judgment, and most capable to express their thoughts, will find it difficult, if not impossible to express intelligibly wherein this objective evidence consists: But that really it is there, that there is such a thing, is impossible for them to question.

(3.) If poor men, who differ infinitely less from one another, than the most exalted created being can be supposed to do from God, do impart to the product of their own thoughts, and leave on their writings such peculiar and discernible characters of their own genius, and spirit, as, at first view, upon the least serious attention, convinces the reader, that they are the authors and enables him to distinguish their writings from others, is it not reasonable to suppose, that a book written by God, must carry on it a peculiar and distinguishing impress of its author; and that by so much the more certainly discernible, by any that has right notions of him, as the difference betwixt him and the most exalted human genius is infinitely greater, than that betwixt the most contemptible pamphlet writer and the most elevated scholar? Nay, is it not impossible rationally to imagine the contrary? Can we think that he, who in all his works, even in the meanest insect, has left such objective evidence, and such impressions of himself, whereby he is certainly known to be the author, has not left impressions, more remarkable and distinguishing, on his *word*, which *he has magnified above all his name*, that is, all the means whereby he designs to make himself known, and which he designed to be the principal means of imparting

* "Though you had not named the author, &c. I could have known and "avouched him. There is a face of a style, by which we scholars know one "another, no less than our persons by a visible countenance." *Bishop Hall's Preface to Dr. Twist's doubting Cons. resolved*, pag. 2.

the knowledge of himself to men, and that for the highest purposes—their *salvation* and *his own glory*.

(4.) This impress, those characters, prints and vestiges of the infinite perfections of the Deity, that unavoidably must be allowed to be stamped on, and shine, not merely, or only, or principally, in the matter, but in that as spoken or written, and in the writings or words, in their stile, the spirit running through them, the scope, tendency, &c. This θεοπρεπεια or God-becoming impress of majesty, sovereignty, omniscience, independence, holiness, justice, goodness, wisdom and power, is not only a sufficient and real, but in very deed, the greatest objective light and evidence imaginable. And where one has an *understanding given to know him that is true*, and is made thereby to entertain any suitable notions of the Deity, upon intuition of this objective evidence, without waiting to reason on the matter, his assent will be carried, and unavoidably determined to rest on it as the highest ground of assurance. And this assent founded on this impress of the Deity, in his own word, is indeed an assent of the highest degree. And thus far faith resembles our intuitive knowledge, with this difference, not as to the manner of the mind's acting but as to the ability whence it acts; that in our intuitive knowledge, as Mr. Locke, and those of his opinion, restricts it, the evidence or objective light is such as not only is immediately without reasoning discerned, but such as lies open to, and is discernible by our understandings, without any subjective light, any work of the Spirit of God, either repairing our disabled faculties, or elevating and guiding them to the due observation, or fixing their attention, or freeing their minds of the power and present influence of aversion of will, disorder of affections, and prejudices that obstruct the discerning power. Whereas this is really necessary in this case; and though the objective evidence is great, and still the same, yet according to the greater or lesser degree of this assistance, our assent must be stronger or weaker, more fixed or wavering.

(5.) When this objective evidence is actually observant to, and under the view of the mind thus enabled,

disposed and assisted, there doth arise from it, and there is made by it, an impression on the whole soul corresponding thereto. The beaming of God's sovereign authority awes conscience. The piercing evidence of his omniscience increases that regard, the view of his goodness, mercy, love and grace, operates on the will, and leaves a relish on the affections, and this truly resembles sensible evidence, though it is of spiritual things, and of a spiritual nature; nor is it, as it is evidence, inferior to, but upon many accounts preferable to that which results from the impression made by sensible objects. And this, as was observed of the former, is also greater or less, according, and in proportion unto the view we have of that objective light abovementioned. This self-evidencing power is a resultancy from, and in degree keeps pace with that self-evidencing light.

(6.) The effects wrought on the soul are such, many of them, as not only are most discernible in the time, but likewise do remain on the soul, some of them ever after, many of them for a long tract of time, and in their nature are such as evidently tend to the perfecting of our faculties, are suitable to them, and for their improvement, even according to what unprejudiced and sober reason determines, as to that wherein the defects of our faculties, and their perfection consists. And the reality of those effects, whereof the mind is inwardly conscious, appears to the conviction of beholders, in their influence upon the person's deportment before the world. And,

(7.) Hence it is, that though our conviction neither needs, nor is founded on reasonings; yet from those effects ground is given, and matter offered for a rational and argumentative confirmation of our assent, and the grounds thereof, and the validity of it for our own confirmation, when that evidence which first gave ground for our faith, and wherein it rests, is not actually under view, as also for the conviction of others.

(8.) This evidence is such as indeed challenges, and is a sufficient bottom for an assent of the highest degree. And indeed the saints of God, and that even of the meanest condition, and who have been under the most mani-

fest disadvantages, both as to capacity and education, with the like occasions of improvement, upon this bottom have reached faith, comprising assurance without doubt, even that *full assurance of faith*, yea *the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, as has been evident by the effects in death and life, of which we have notable instances not a few in Heb. xi, throughout, both in adversity and prosperity, life and death.

5. "I observe, That this light or objective evidence "whereon faith is bottomed, has no affinity with, but is "at the farthest remove from enthusiastic impulses, or "imaginations."

(1.) This is not a persuasion without reason. Here is the strongest reason, and the assent hereon given leans upon the most pregnant evidence.

(2.) It carries no contradiction to our faculties, but influences them, each in a way suitable to its nature and condition.

(3.) Yea more, none of our faculties in their due use do contradict, or at least disprove it. Whereas enthusiastic impressions are irrational.

(4.) This is not a persuasion, nor a ground for it without, or contrary to the word, but it is the evidence of the word itself, that by it we are directed to attend to, and improve.

(5.) Yea it is what our other faculties in their due use will give a consequential confirmation to, as we have heard. Wherefore,

(6.) Mr. Locke shall be allowed to run down enthusiasm as much as he pleaseth, and "persuasions where-"of no reason can be given, but that we are strongly "persuaded," or not to give credit to those that can say no more for themselves, "but we see or feel," &c. But these things as delivered by Locke, need some cautions. As, 1. A persuasion whereof no reason can be given, is certainly not faith, but fancy: but a persuasion, whereof he that hath it, through weakness, cannot give an account, may be *solid*. 2. A persuasion may be solid, of which he that hath it, cannot give another evidence of the same kind as he hath himself. It is enough that proof of another sort, and sufficient in its kind, is offer-

ed. 3. If one says, he sees and he feels, this may be satisfying to him, though he cannot give any distinct account of the evidence he hath. And that he cannot thus account for the nature of things that are within him, concludes not against the reality and truth of what he has the experience: but his experience is not ground of conviction to others, unless other proofs are offered. A man of a shallow capacity, destitute of education, might be convicted of enthusiasm by a subtle blind man, to whom he cannot for his seeing give an evidence of the same kind, nor open the nature of visible evidence, nor give any other proof that he is not mistaken, but that he sees; and yet notwithstanding of this he is not mistaken, assents not without reason, and has no ground to call in question what he sees, but may and will securely laugh at all the blind man's quirks, and tell him, *he is blind.* The case is parallel. We must not by this Atheistical scare-crow be frightened out of our faith and experience.

6. "That many read the scriptures, without discern-"ing any thing of this light, is no argument against it." For,

(1.) Many want that supernatural ability, that understanding whereby God is known, whereby Christ's *sheep know his voice from that of a stranger, and so not being of God, they cannot hear his words.*

(2.) Many want, and are utterly destitute of any tolerable notions of God: It is impossible such should discern what is suitable to him.

(3.) Many have perverse notions of God rivetted on their minds, and that both among the learned and unlearned; and finding the scripture not suited to, but contrary to those false pre-conceived impressions, they look on it as foolishness.

(4.) Many want that humble frame of spirit, which has the promise of divine teaching; *the meek he guides in the way.* It is they who are fools in their own eyes, who get wisdom.

(5.) Many are proud and conceited deeply, and no wonder then that they know nothing.

(6.) Many have the vanity of their minds uncured, and so hunt after vain things, and fix not in observation of what is solid, and thereby *their foolish hearts are hardened*, and their minds darkened and diverted.

(7.) Not a few are under the power of prevailing lusts, disordered affections, and out of favor to them they are so far from desiring an increase of knowledge, that on the contrary, *they like not to retain God in their knowledge.* What they already know, is uneasy to them, because contrary to their lusts, and therefore they would be rid of it.

(8.) Many there are that despise the Spirit of God, reject his operations, seek not after him, contemn him: And no wonder such as refuse the guide, lose the way.

(9.) Many, for those and other sins, are judicially left of God to the *god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not.*

(10.) Many never attempt to do his will, and so no wonder they come not to a discerning whether the word spoken and written, is of God. And if all these things are considered, we shall be so far from questioning the truth, because many see not the evidence, that this very blindness will be an argument to prove the truth of it, and a strong evidence of the need of it, and of supernatural power to believe it.

Finally, Persons sober and attentive want not some darker views of this evidence, which may and should draw them on to wait for more. And I take the honorable confessions, in favor of the scriptures, made by adversaries, to have proceeded from some fainter views of this sort.

Thus I have considered the force of what I find pleaded by Mr. Locke; stated the question; cleared in some measure our opinion as it stands opposed to that of the Rationalists; assigned an intelligible notion of the *reason of faith;* and shewed it to be such as the meanest are capable of, and such as is proposed to all who are obliged to believe the scriptures; whereas these historical proofs are above the reach of thousands, and were never heard of by innumerable multitudes, who, on pain of

damnation, are obliged to receive the scriptures as the word of God.

IV. Having in our third observation overthrown the ground of Mr. Locke's opinion, we are now to clear, that what Mr. Locke builds on, must of course fall; particularly what he tells us, Lib. 4. Cap. 18. Par. 6. page 584. "That they who make revelation alone the sole "object of faith, cannot say, that it is a matter of faith, "and not of reason, to believe, that such or such a pro- "position, to be found in such or such a book, is of divine "inspiration; unless it can be revealed, That that pro- "position, or that all in that book was communicated by "divine inspiration." And he goes on telling us, "That "without such a particular revelation, assuring us of this, "that this proposition is by divine inspiration, *it can ne-* "ver be matter of faith, but matter of reason, to assent "to it."

What Mr. Locke designs by this discourse, I know not; unless he meant to put us under a necessity to prove every proposition of the scripture to be of divine inspiration, before we believe what it exhibits. And if this is what he intends, he overthrows the Christian religion entirely, at least as to its use and advantage to the generality. But waving what further might be observed, I shall only animadvert a little upon that one assertion, "That our belief, that this or that proposition is "from God, is not an act of faith but of reason." As to which I say,

1. If Mr. Locke designed no more but this, That the mentioned assent to the scripture propositions, is an act of, and subjected in our rational, or intellectual faculty, it might well be admitted. Or,

2. If Mr. Locke meant, that this assent is agreeable to the nature of our minds, that is, that it is not really contrary to the true principles of reason, nor such as proceeds without such grounds as the nature of our understandings require for founding an assent, we should admit, that in this sense it is an act of reason, that is, a rational act, as not only being elicit by our understandings, but depending on such a reason or ground, as the nature

of the intellectual power requires, and which must be always consistent with our certain knowledge. But,

3. Neither of these being intended, we cannot go along with Mr. Locke in what he means by this expression, That our belief of scripture propositions, is an act of reason, that is, an assent not built upon divine testimony, but on such other arguings and reasonings, as we can find out for proving that God revealed it. Because we say, and shall afterwards prove, that the scriptures do evidence themselves to be from God, in that way above-expressed, and afterwards to be explained and confirmed, which we hope shall be done in such sort, as may effectually repel the force of what Mr. Locke has pleaded in opposition to the scriptures, and shew that there is no reason for ranking all the truths therein delivered amongst those conjectural things that lean only on probabilities and reasonings from them, which Mr. Locke evidently does, while he sinks traditional revelation as to the point of certainty below our intuitive, rational and sensible knowledge; and banishes all faith, properly so called, out of the world, leaving no room for it, and substituting in its place an act of reason, proceeding upon probabilities, that is, on historical proofs, which he reckons only among probabilities; nor do I blame him for this last, though perhaps some things he has offered on this head, might be excepted against; but this is not my business.

The question in short amounts to this, "Whereas the "scriptures, wherever they come, oblige all to whom "they are offered, to receive them not as the *word of* "*man*, but, as indeed they are, the *word of God*; upon "what ground or formal reason is it, that we assent "thus unto them, and receive them as the *word of God*, "to his glory and our salvation, in compliance with our "duty?"

In answer to this important query, I shall offer what, upon a review of former experience, upon consideration of the scriptures, and upon what others, especially that judicious and profound divine Dr. Owen, in his two treatises on this subject, have written on this head, appears satisfying to me: And this I shall do in the few following *Pro-*

positions, which I shall, with as much brevity and perspicuity as I can, lay down, and shortly confirm with some few arguments.

PROP. I. "That faith whereby we assent unto, and "receive the word of God, to his glory and our salva- "tion, is faith divine and supernatural."

1. There are at this day, who teach, That whatever faith is at present to be found amongst men, is built upon, and resolved into the testimony of men.* And therefore it will be necessary to insist a little in confirming and explaining of this important truth.

2. To clear this we observe, that the understanding, or that faculty, power or ability of the soul of man, whereby we perceive, and assent unto truths upon their proper evidence, may be distinguished or branched into diverse subordinate powers, in respect of the different truths to which it assents. 1. We have an ability of assenting unto the self-evident maxims of reason, such as that, *The same thing, at the same time, cannot be and not be*, upon their own self-evidence, without any other argument, than a bare proposal of them in terms we understand. 2. We have an ability to assent unto other truths, upon conviction of their truth by arguments, drawn from the forementioned self-evident truths, or any other acknowledged or owned by us. 3. We have an ability to assent unto truths, upon the evidence of the testimony of credible witnesses, or persons worthy to be believed, and of deserving credit. This ability, and the assent given by it to such truths, upon such testimony, are both called by the same common name, faith.

3. Faith then is that power or ability of the mind of man, whereby he is capable of receiving, and actually assents to truths upon the evidence of the testimony of persons worthy of credit, who know what they testify, and will not deceive us. Now whereas the person giving this testimony, is either God, men or angels, good or

* L'Clerc in his Logics.

bad, faith may be considered as either *divine, human* or *angelical.* This last, as of no consideration to our purpose, we shall lay aside. That faith, or ability, whereby we assent to the testimony of men worthy of credit, is called *human faith,* And that whereby we assent to truths upon the evidence of the testimony of God, who cannot lie, is called *divine faith.*

4. Divine faith is that power, or ability whereby we assent unto, and receive truths proposed to us upon evidence of the word or testimony of God, to our own salvation, in compliance with our duty, to the glory of God.

5. In this account of divine faith, we add, *in compliance with our duty, to the glory of God, and our own salvation,* because devils and men may yield some assent unto truths, upon the evidence of God's testimony, which neither answers their duty, nor turns to the glory of God in their salvation, of which we do not now design to speak, and therefore by this clause have cut it off, and laid it aside, as not belonging to that faith whereof we now speak, and whereby we conceive all, to whom the scriptures come, are obliged to receive them.

6. This faith now described may be called divine, and supernatural, and really it is so on two accounts, 1. Because this ability is wrought in them, in whom it is found, by the divine and supernatural power of God. 2. Because it builds not its persuasion of, yields not its assent unto the truths it receives upon any human authority or testimony; but upon the testimony of God, who can neither be ignorant of any truth, nor be deceived, or deceive us.

7. It now remains, that we confirm this proposition that we have thus shortly explained. And this we shall do by its several parts. *First,* then we assert, "That "this faith is wrought in those, who have it, by the "power of God." Now for clearing this, we shall only hint at the heads of a few arguments, leaving the further proof to polemic treatises. 1. This ability to believe and receive the things of God to our salvation and his glory, is in scripture expressly denied to natural or unrenewed men. 2 Thes. iii, 2. *All men have not faith.* 1 Cor. ii, 14.—*The natural man receiveth not the things of*

he Spirit of God: For they are foolishness unto him: Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. John viii, 47.—*Ye therefore hear not God's words, because ye are not of God.* 2. This is expressly denied to be of ourselves, and asserted a supernatural *gift of God.* Ephes. ii, 8.—*By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* 3. The production of it is ascribed unto God. He it is that fulfils in his people *the work of faith with power,* 2 Thes. i, 11. He it is that gives them, that is, that enables them, *on the behalf of Christ, to believe and suffer for his name,* Phil. i, 29. It is one of the *fruits* produced by the *spirit,* Gal. v, 22. and of it Christ is the *author.* Heb. xii, 2.

Secondly, We are next shortly to prove, "that this "faith builds its persuasion on the testimony of God, "evidencing itself such unto the mind," and not on human testimony. 1. It is in scripture expressly said not to *stand in the wisdom of men,* 1 Cor. ii, 5, that is, it leans not on the word, authority, eloquence or reasonings of men. 2. It is expressly in that same verse, said to *stand in the power of God,* that is, as the foregoing words compared with verse 13, explain it, *in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,* and which he demonstrates or evidences by his power, accompanying them, to be the *word of God.* 3. It is described in such a way as fully clears this; it is held forth as a *receiving of the word, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe,* 1 Thes. ii, 13. Many other proofs might be added, but this is sufficient to answer our purpose.

Thirdly, We shall next shortly prove, "that we are "obliged in duty thus to believe the scriptures, or to "receive them as the word of God, and not of men." 1. The scriptures are indeed, and hold themselves forth every where as the word of God. They are the oracles of God, which *holy men of God spake by the motion of the Spirit of God,* and *wrote by divine inspiration,* and the *Holy Ghost speaks to us by them.** Now when God utters oracles, speaks, writes and utters his mind to us, we

* Heb. v, 12.—2 Pet. i, 20, 21.—2 Tim. iii, 16.—Mark xii, 36.—Acts i, 16.—Acts xxviii, 25.—Heb. iii, 7.

are in duty obliged and bound to assent to what he says, and yield what obedience he requires. This the very light of nature teacheth. 2. The scriptures were written for this very end, that we might believe, *and that believing we might have life*, John xx, 30, 31. *The scriptures of the prophets* (which contain the *revelation of the mystery* of God's will, otherwise not known) *according to the commandment of the everlasting God, are made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith*, Rom. xvi, 25, 26. Again the scriptures are termed *a more sure word of prophecy* than the voice from heaven, and men are said to *do well, to take heed* to them, 2 Pet. i, toward the close. That is, it is their duty to take heed to them, or believe them. 3. The most dreadful judgments are threatened against those who receive not the word of God from the prophets or apostles, whether by word or writ, is all one. *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for that city*, Matt. x, 14, 15. Accordingly we find the apostles preach the word at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii; demand acceptance of it both of Jews and Gentiles; and upon their refusal they testify against them in the way of the Lord's appointment, ver. 51. Though so far as we can learn, they there wrought no miracles to confirm their mission. 4. We have above heard the apostle commending the Thessalonians for *receiving the word as the word of God, and not of man.* 1. Thess. ii, 13, which sufficiently shews that it was their duty.

Whereas some may here say, "How can it be our duty to believe the word of God, since it has been above proved, that we are not able of ourselves thus to do it." I answer briefly, 1. The very light of nature requires perfect obedience of us; and yet we are not able to yield this to it. 2. The scriptures plainly require, *that we serve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear*, Heb. xii, 28, and yet we must have grace whereby to do it. 3. We have *destroyed ourselves*, Hos. xiii, 9, and that through this, our faith or natural ability of believing truths upon testimony, is so impaired and weakened, and

by prejudices so obstructed otherwise, that we are not able to discern the evidence of God's authority, in his word, nor assent thereon to his testimony in a due manner, yet this cannot reasonably prejudge God's right to demand credit to his word, whereon he has impressed such prints of his authority, as are sufficiently obvious to any one's faith, that is not thus faultily depraved. 4. We have therefore no reason to question God, who gave us eyes, which we have put out, but to blame ourselves, and aim *to do his will*, that is, wait on him in all the ways of his own appointment; and we have no reason to despair, but that in this way we may have graciously given us of God's sovereign grace, an understanding to know whether these truths are of God, or they who spoke them did it of themselves, (1 John v, 20. John vii, 17.) though we cannot claim this as what is our due.

Thus we have in some measure cleared what that faith is, whereby the scriptures must be believed to the glory of God and our own salvation, and confirmed shortly our account of it from the scriptures of truth. We now proceed to

PROP. II. "The reason, for which we are obliged in "duty to believe or receive the scriptures as the word "of God, is not, That God has by his Spirit wrought "faith in us, or given us this ability thus to receive "them."

This proposition we have offered, because some do blame Protestants for saying so; whereas none of them really do it. Nor can any man reasonably say it. For clearing this observe,

1. It is indeed true, that we cannot believe them, unless God give us this gracious ability or faith to believe them, and by his Holy Spirit remove our natural darkness, and clear our minds of those prejudices against his word, wherewith they are naturally filled.

2. Yet this is not the reason wherefore we do assent unto, or receive the scriptures; for it were impertinent, if any should ask, Upon what account do ye believe the scriptures to be the word of God? to answer, I be-

lieve it because God has wrought the faith of it in me. This is not to tell wherefore we do believe, but to tell how we came to be furnished with power or ability to believe.

PROP. III. "We are not to believe the scriptures upon the authority of any man or church: or, The reason wherefore we are in duty bound thus to assent to, or receive the scriptures as the word of God, is not, that any man, or church, says so."

This is fully demonstrated by our writers against the Papists. For confirmation of it, it is sufficient for our purpose at present to observe,

1. That to believe, that the scriptures are the word of God, because such a man, or church says so, answers not our duty. Our duty is to believe God speaking to us, upon the account of his own veracity; and not because men say that this is his word. This is not to believe God and his prophets for the sake of their own testimony, but for the authority of men, (2 Chron. xx. 20.)

2. The faith that leans upon this testimony, is built not on the *truth of God*, but on the *testimony of men*, who may be deceived and may deceive: *All men are liars.*

3. We have no where in the word this proposed as the ground whereon, in duty, we are obliged to believe the scriptures.

4. The church, and what she says, is to be tried by the word, and her testimony is so far only to be received as the word consents; and therefore we cannot make this the ground of our faith, without a scandalous circle, which the church of Rome can never clear herself of.

5. But I need insist no further on this head. That church which only claims this regard to her testimony, is long since become so well known, and so fully convicted of manifold falsehoods, that her testimony rather prejudges than helps to confirm whatever it is engaged for.

PROP. IV. "The rational arguments whereby the truth of the Christian religion is evinced and demon-

" strated against Atheists, though they are many ways " useful, yet are not the ground or reason whereon, " in a way of duty, all who have the scriptures propos- " ed to them, are obliged to believe and receive them " as the word of God."

These moral and rational considerations are, and may be many ways useful to stop the mouths of enemies, to beget in them, who yet are unacquainted with the true intrinsic worth of the word, some value for it, and engage them to consider it; to relieve them that do believe against objections, and strengthen their faith. This is allowed to them; and is sufficient in this loose and Atheistical age, to engage persons of all sorts who value the scriptures, to study them. But yet it is not upon them that the faith required of us, as to the divine authority of the scriptures, is to be founded. For,

1. These are indeed a proper foundation for a rational assent, such as is given upon moral proof or demonstration. And they are able to beget a strong moral persuasion of this truth. But this assent which they beget, cannot, in any propriety of speech, be called faith, either divine or human. For faith is an assent upon testimony.

2. The faith that is required of us, is required to be founded not on the *wisdom of men*, that is, the reasonings or arguings of men. Now this leans only and entirely on these.

3. This faith is, in the way of duty, required of many. Many are in duty obliged to receive the scriptures as the word of God, to whom these arguments were never offered. The apostles never made use of them, and yet required their hearers to receive and believe their word.

4. This faith many are obliged to, who are not capable of understanding or reaching the force of these arguments.

PROP. V. " The faith of the scripture's divine au- " thority is not founded in this, That they by whom " they were written, did, by miracles, prove they were " sent of God."

I need not spend much time in clearing this. It will sufficiently confirm it to observe,

1. That many are, and were in duty obliged to yield this assent to, and believe the scriptures, who saw not these miracles.

2. We are no other way sure of these being wrought, than by the testimony of the word.

3. This way is not countenanced by the word: for it no where teaches us to expect miracles as the ground of our assent, but upon the contrary declares, that the word of Moses and the prophets is sufficient to lay a foundation for faith, without any new miracle, (Luke x. 31.)

PROP. VI. "The reason whereon, in duty we are "bound to receive the scriptures as the word of God, "is not any private voice, whisper or suggestion from "the Spirit of God, separate and distinct from the writ-"ten word, saying in our ear, or suggesting to our mind, "that the scriptures are the word of God."

There is no need to insist long in proof of this. For,

1. Many are bound to believe the word of God, to whom never any such testimony was given; but no man is bound to receive the scriptures, to whom the ground whereon he is bound to believe them, is not proposed.

2. There is no where in the word, any ground given for any such testimony. Nor doth the experience of any of the Lord's people witness, that they are acquainted with any such suggestion. And besides, the question might again be moved concerning this suggestion, Wherefore do ye believe this to be the testimony of God?

PROP. VII. "That whereon all, to whom the word of "God comes, are bound to receive it with the faith "above described, is not any particular word of the "scripture bearing testimony to all the rest. As for "instance, it is not merely or primarily upon this ac-"count, that I am bound to receive all the written word "as the word of God, because the scripture says,

" 2 Tim. iii. 16. *That all scripture is given by inspiration* " *of God.*"

This is very plain upon many accounts, some of which I shall shortly offer.

1. We had been obliged to believe the scriptures with faith supernatural, though these testimonies had been left out. Yea, they who had them not, were obliged to believe the word of God.

2. These have no more evidence of their being from God, than other places of scriptures; and therefore we are not to believe the scriptures merely on their testimony; but have the same reason to receive with faith as the word of God, every part of the scripture as well as these testimonies.

PROP. VIII. " The reason why we are *bound, with* " faith supernatural and divine, to receive the word of " God, is not, that the things therein therein revealed, " or the matters of the scriptures, are suitable unto the " apprehensions which men naturally have of God, " themselves and other things, and congruous to the in- " terests, necessities, desires and capacities of men."

I shall not spend time in overthrowing this, which some seem so fond of; only for confirming the proposition observe,

1. This suitableness of the matter unto the apprehensions, or natural notions of men concerning God, themselves and other things, &c. as discerned by men unrenewed, and made out by their reasonings, is not a ground for faith, or an assent to testimony, but for a persuasion of another sort.

2. There are many things revealed in the scripture, which are to any mere natural man no way capable of this character. No man receives, or can reasonably receive on this account, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the like. It is true, these are not contrary to our reason; but it is likewise true, they have no such evident congruity to the notions our reason suggests of God, as should engage us to receive the discovery as from God; yea, on the contrary, there is a seeming inconsistency that has startled many.

PROP. IX. "When therefore it is inquired, Where-
" fore do ye believe, and by faith rest in the scriptures
" as the word of God, and not of man? We do not an-
" swer, It is because God has given us an ability so to
" do; because the church says, it is the word of God;
" because there are many strong moral arguments prov-
" ing it so; because they who wrote it, wrought mira-
" cles; because God has by some voice whispered in our
" ear, or secretly suggested it to us, that this is the word
" of God; or because there are particular scriptures
" which bear witness to all the rest that they are of God;
" nor finally, because the matter therein revealed, seem
" worthy of God to our reason.

This is the sum of what has been hitherto cleared; and the reasons offered against all these, whether we take them separately or conjunctly. They prove, that not one of them, nor all taken together, are the formal reason whereon we are obliged to believe the word of God, or receive it with faith supernatural and divine.

PROP. X. " The formal reason or ground whereon I
" assent to, or receive the whole scriptures, and every
" particular truth in them, and am obliged in duty so to
" do, is, the authority and truth of God speaking in
" them, and speaking every truth they contain, evidenc-
" ing itself to my faith, when duly exercised about
" them, and attending to them, by their own divine and
" distinguishing light and power. Or when it is inquired,
" Wherefore do ye believe, receive, assent to and rest
" in the scriptures as indeed the word of God, and not
" of man? I answer, I do believe them, because they
" carry in them, to my faith, an evidence of God, or do
" evidence themselves by their own light and power to
" my faith, duly exercised about them, that they are
" the word of God, and not of man."

Now for explaining this, which is the assertion that contains the truth principally intended, I shall offer the few following remarks:

1. However great the evidence of God in the word is, yet it cannot, nor is it requisite that it should, deter-

mine any to receive and assent to it, whose faith and ability of believing is not duly disposed. Though the sun shine never so clearly, yet he that has no eyes, or whose eyes are vitiated, and under any total darkening indisposition, sees it not. No wonder then, that they, who have not naturally, and to whom God has not yet, by supernatural grace, given eyes to see, ears to hear, or hearts to perceive, discern not the evidence of God's authority and truth in the word.

2. Although there really may be in any an ablility, or faith capable of discerning this evidence; yet if that faith is not exercised, and duly applied to the consideration of the word, whereon this evidence is impressed, he cannot assent unto, or believe it in a due manner, to the glory of God, his own salvation and according to his duty. There is evidence sufficient in many moral metaphysical and mathematical truths; and yet abundance of persons, who are sufficiently capable of it, do not assent unto these truths, nor discern this evidence; not because it is wanting, but because they do not apply their minds to the observation of it in a due way. God has not imparted such an evidence to his word, as the light of the sun has, which forces an acknowledgment of itself upon any, whose eyes are not wilfully shut; but designing to put us to duty, he has imparted such evidence, as they, who have eyes to see, if according to duty they apply their minds, may discern, and be satisfied by.

3. This light and power evidencing the divine authority of the scriptures, is really impressed upon every truth, or every word which God speaks to us, especially as it stands in its own place, related to, and connected with the other parts of the scripture, whereto it belongs. But of this more hereafter.

4. When to question, wherefore, or on what grounds do I assent to the scriptures as indeed the word of God and not of man? It is answered, I do it, because it evidences itself to be God's word by its own light or power, there is no place for that captious question, How know ye this light and power to be divine, or from God? For, it is of the nature of all light, external and sensible, or

internal and mental, (concerning which two it is hard to determine which of them is properly, and which only metaphorically, light) that it not only clears to the mind other things discernible by it, but satisfies the mind about itself, proportionably to the degree of its clearness. The light of the sun discovers sensible objects, and satisfies us so fully about itself, that we need have recourse to no new arguments to convince that we have this light, and that it is real. In like manner the evidence of any mathematical truth, not only quiets us about the truth, but makes the mind rest assured about itself. And so the divine light and power of the word, not only satisfies our minds, as to those truths they are designed of God to discover, but, in proportion to the degree of light in them, or conveyed by them, satisfy the mind about this light or power, that it is *truth* and is *no lie*. Nor is there need for any other argument to convince a mind affected with this, of it. It is true, if a blind man should say so to me, How know ye that the sun shines, and ye see it? I would answer, I know it by the evidence of its own light affecting mine eyes: And if he should further say, But how prove ye to me, that ye are not deluded, and that really it is so? Then I would be obliged to produce other arguments whereof he is capable: But then it must be allowed that the evidence of these arguments is not so great as the evidence I myself have of it by its own light; though they may be more convincing to him. And further, this is not to convince myself, but to satisfy him, and free my mind from the disturbance of his objections. In like manner, if one, that denies the scriptures, shall say, Wherefore do ye believe or rest in the scriptures, as the word of God? I answer, I do it, because they evidence themselves to my mind, by their own light, or power, to be of God. If he shall say, I cannot discern this. I answer, It is because your mind is darkened, ye want eyes, or have them shut. If he shall further urge, That my light is not real, I will prove it by arguments, which may stop his mouth, and be more convincing to him than my assertion, which is all that hitherto he has; but yet these arguments are not that whereon my mind rests satisfied

as to the truth; though they may be of great use, not only to convince him, but to relieve my mind against such subtle sophisms, as he might make use of, which though they could not persuade me out of the sight of my eyes, or the evidence shining into my mind, yet troubled me how to answer them, and at times, when, through my inadvertency, or indisposition of my eyes, or through clouds overspreading and interposing betwixt this light and me, these objections might shake me a little.

5. Considering we are but renewed in part, and our faith is imperfect, and liable to many defects, the ministry of the church is of manifold necessity and use, to awaken us to attend to this light, to cure the indispositions of our minds, to hold up this light to us, to point out and explain the truths it discovers, whereby our minds are made more sensible of the evidence of this light. And upon many other accounts of a like nature, are the ordinances necessary, and through the efficacy of the divine ordination and appointment, useful for establishing our minds, naturally sluggish, dark, weak and unstable, and which are exposed to manifold temptations, in the faith of the scriptures.

6. In order to our holding fast our faith, and being stable in it, besides this outward ministry, and the inward work of the Holy Ghost, giving us an understanding to discern this evidence, and besides the forementioned use of the moral arguments abovementioned; besides all these, to our believing and persevering in a due manner, in the faith of the scriptures, we stand in need of the daily influences of the Spirit of God, to strengthen our faith or ability of discerning spiritual things, to clear our minds of prejudices, and incidental indispositions, to seal the truths on our minds, and give us refreshing tastes of them, and confirm us many ways against opposition.

7. This light, whereby the written word evidences itself unto the minds of those who have spiritual ears to hear, and apply them, is nothing else save the impress of the majesty, truth, omniscience, wisdom, holiness, justice, grace, mercy, and authority of God, stamped upon the

scriptures, by the Holy Ghost, and beaming or shining into the minds of such persons upon their hearing or perusal, and affecting them with a sense of these perfections, both in what is spoken, and in the majestic and God-becoming way of speaking: They speak as *never man spake*; the matter spoken, and the manner of speaking, has a greatness discernible by a spiritual understanding, that fully satisfies it, that God is the speaker. And all the impressions of God's wisdom, faithfulness, omniscience and majesty, that are stamped upon the matter contained in the scriptures, being conveyed only by the word, do join the impressions that are upon the word, and strengthen the evidence they give of their divine original, since these impressions do not otherwise appear to our minds, or affect them, than by the word. The word, by a God-becoming manifestation of the truth, that scorns all these little and mean arts of insinuation, by fair and enticing words, and artificially dressed up argumentations, with other the like confessions of human weakness, that are in all human writings, commends itself to the conscience, dives into the souls of men, into all the secret recesses of their hearts, guides, teaches, directs, determines and judges in them, and upon them, in the name, majesty and authority of God. And when it enters thus into the soul, it fills it with the *light of the glory* of the beamings of those perfections upon it, whereby it is made to cry out, *The voice of God and not of man.*

8. This power, whereby the word evidences itself to be the word of God and not of man, is nothing else save that authority and awful efficacy, which he puts forth in and by it over the minds and consciences of men, working divinely, and leaving effects of his glorious and omnipotent power in them and on them. It enters into the conscience, a territory exempt from the authority of creatures, and subject only to the dominion of God, it challenges, convinces, threatens, awakens, sets it a roaring, and the creation cannot quiet it again. It commands a calm, and the sea, that was troubled before, is smooth, and devils and men are not able to disturb its repose. It enters into the mind, opens its eyes,

fills it with a glorious, clear, pure and purifying light, and sets before it wonders before unknown, undiscerned in counsel and knowledge, concerning God, ourselves, our sin, our duty, our danger, and our relief, the works, the ways, the counsels and purposes of God. It speaks to the will, converts it, and powerfully disengages it from what it was most engaged to, what it embraced, and was even glued to before, so that no art or force of eloquence, argument, fear or hope, could make it quit its hold; it makes it hastily quit its embraces, and turn its bent another way, the quite opposite, and with open arms embrace what nothing could make it look to before, takes away its aversion, makes it willingly not only go, but run after what it bore the greatest aversion to before, and obstinately refuse to close with any other thing. It enters the affections, makes *them rise from* the ground, gives them such a divine touch, that, though they may through their fickle nature, be carried at a time by force another way, yet they never rest, but point heavenward. It comes to the soul, sunk under the pressure of unrelievable distresses, sticking in the *miry clay*, refusing comfort, and in appearance capable of none, it plucks it out of the clay, raises it out of the horrible pit, sets its *feet upon a rock*, fills it with joy, yea makes it exceeding joyful, while even all outward pressures and tribulation continue, yea are increased. It enters into the soul, lays hold on the reigning lusts, to which all formerly had submitted, and that with delight; it tries and condemns those powerful criminals, makes the soul throw off the yoke, and join in the execution of its sentence against, and on them. Now where the case is thus stated, how can the soul, that feels this powerful word, that comes from the Lord most High, do otherwise than *fall down*, and own, *That God is in it of a truth.*

9. Whereas some may hereon object, "That many, "who have for a long time heard and perused this "word, have not perceived this light, nor felt this pow- "er, and, on this supposition, seem exempted from "any obligation to believe the word." I answer,

(1.) Many who have spent not a few years in prying into the works of God in the world, have not discerned to this day the beaming evidence, and clear declarations of his glory in them; yet none will hereon say, that they are excusable, or that want of an evidence is chargeable on the works of God. And why should not the case be allowed the same as to the word? May they not have this evidence, though men do not discern it? And may not men, even on account of this evidence be obliged to believe them?

(2.) No wonder many discern not this light, and are not affected with it, since all men have put out their own eyes, or impaired by their own fault, that faith or power of discerning the voice of God, speaking either by his word or works, which our natures originally had. In many this evil is increased, and this power further weakened by their shutting their eyes, and entertaining of prejudices manifestly unjust, againrt God's word and works. Others turn away their eyes, and will not look to, or attend to the word in that way wherein God ordains them to attend to it, that they may discern its light, and feel its power. And God has hereon judicially given many up to the power of Satan, to be further blinded. And no wonder they, whose eyes the *God of this world has blinded*, should not discern the glory of the gospel of Christ, who is the *image of God shining into their minds.*

(3.) No wonder they should not discern this; for God to this day has not given them *eyes to see, ears to hear*, or *hearts to perceive.* It is an act of sovereign grace, which God owes to none, to open their eyes, which they have wilfully blinded: and where he sees not meet to do this, it is not strange, that they are not affected with the clearest evidence.

(4.) Light, however clear, cannot of itself supply the defect of the discerning power. The sun, though it shines, cannot make the blind to see. The word has this light in it, though the blind see it not; yea I may adventure to say, that the word of God contained in the scriptures, which he has magnified above all his name, has in it more, and no less discernible evidences of the

divine perfections, and consequently of its divine original and authority, than the works of creation, some of which are sufficient to carry in some conviction of God in it, even on the minds of those who are not savingly enlightened, if they attend but to it in the due exercise of their rational abilities, that is, in such a manner as they do, or may attend to it, without saving illumination, laying aside wilful prejudice; which though it will not be sufficient to draw such an assent, as will engage and enable them to receive the scriptures, in a due manner, to the glory of God, and their own salvation, and comply with them, yet I conceive it will be sufficient to justify against them the word's claim to a divine original, and cut them off from any use of, or excuse from a plea of the want of sufficient evidence of the divine original of the word. I doubt not, but many of these, who upon conviction said, *that Christ spake as never man spake*, were strangers to saving illumination, and yet saw somewhat of a stamp and impress of divinity in what he said, and the manner of saying it, that drew this confession from them, that rendered them inexcusable, in not listening to him, and complying with his word. Yea I doubt not, that the case will be found the same as to many, with respect to the written word, and would be so to all, if they seriously, and without wilful prejudices, attended to it.

10. I further observe, That to engage to this assent, it is not requisite, that every one feel all these, or the like particular effects at all times, but that the word have this power and put it forth, as occasion needs, and circumstances requires it.

Having thus explained, we are now to prove our assertion "That the ground whereon we are in duty bound "to believe and receive the word of God as his word, "and not the word of man, and whereon all who have "received, and believed it in a due manner, to the glory "of God and their own salvation, do receive it thus, is "the authority and veracity of God speaking in and by "the word, and evidencing themselves by that light and "power, which is conveyed into the soul in and by the "scriptures, or the written word itself."

Many arguments offer themselves for proof of this important assertion, which hitherto we have explained; some of the most considerable of them I shall shortly propose, without insisting largely on the prosecution designing only to hint the arguments that satisfied me, that I was not mistaken as to the grounds whereon, by the forementioned experience, I was brought to receive the scriptures as the word of God.

Arg. 1. God ordinarily in the scriptures offers his mind, requiring us to believe, obey and submit to it upon this and no other ground, viz. the evidence of his own testimony. The only reason commonly insisted on to warrant our faith, oblige us to believe and receive, is, *Thus saith the Lord.*

Arg. 2. When false prophets set up their pretended revelations in competition with his word, he remits them to the evidence his words gave by their own light and power, as that which was sufficient to distinguish and enable them to reject the false pretensions, and cleave to his word, Jer. xxiii, 26, 29. *How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? That are prophets of the deceit of their own hearts; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the mountains in pieces?* In the latter days of that church, when the people were most eminently perplexed with false prophets, both as to their number and subtilty, yet God lays their eternal and temporal safety or ruin, on their discerning aright between his word, and that which was only pretended so to be. And that they might not complain of this imposition, he tenders them security of its easiness of performance: speaking of his own word comparatively as to every thing that is not so, he says, It is as *wheat to chaff*, which may infallibly, by being what it is, be discerned from it; and then absolutely that it hath such properties, as that it will discover itself, even light, heat

and power. A person divinely inspired was to be attended to for no other reason, but the evidence of the word of God, distinguishing itself from the pretended revelations, and satisfying the mind about it, by its light and power.

Arg. 3. When further evidence, as that of miracles, is demanded, as necessary to induce them that are unbelievers to receive and believe the word, it is refused, as what was not in the judgment of God needful, and would not be effectual; and unbelievers are remitted to the self-evidence of the word, as that which would satisfy them, if any thing would. This our Lord teaches clearly in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke xvi, 27, to the end. The rich man being disappointed as to any relief to himself, in the preceding verses, is desirous of preventing the ruin of his brethren, and for this end is concerned to have them induced to believe. To which purpose he proposes, ver. 27, the sending of Lazarus from the dead to certify them of the reality of eternal things: *I pray thee therefore Father*, says he to Abraham, *that wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come to this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* Here the case is plain. The rich man desires a miracle to satisfy his brethren. This is refused, and they are remitted to Moses and the prophets, as what was sufficient. He insists, and thinks a miracle would be more satisfying. This is still refused, and it is plainly taught, That where the evidence of the word of God will not induce or persuade to believe, the most uncommon miracles would not do it.

Arg. 4. When the question is considered particularly, 1 Cor. xiv. What gifts were most to the use of the church, the miraculous gifts of tongues, &c. or the ordinary gift of prophecy, or preaching of the word? this last is preferred, as what was not only more useful for the

edification of believers, but for inducing unbelievers to receive the word, and submit to it; and the way wherein it does this, is mentioned, which is no other than by its evidencing itself upon its naked proposal, in preaching, by its own light and power. Let the whole passage be considered from verse 22, but especially verse 24, 25. *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report, that God is in you of a truth.*

Arg. 5. The constant practice of the apostles fully proves our assertion. The way they took to persuade the unbelieving world to receive the gospel, was not by proposing the arguments commonly insisted upon now, for proving the truth of their doctrine, nor working, nor insisting upon miracles wrought by them, for confirmation of the truth, but by a *bare proposal* of the truth, and a sincere manifestation of it to consciences, in the name of God, they proceeded, and demanded acceptance of it, *as the word of God, and not of man*; and by this means they converted the world. And when they did refuse it, thus proposed, they *shook off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them*, and so laid them open to that awful threatening of our Lord, of punishments more intolerable than those of Sodom and Gommorrah.

Arg. 5. The experience of those who do believe aright, confirms it fully. However they may be relieved against the objections, and capacitated to deal with adversaries by other arguments and means, yet that whereon believers of all sorts, learned and unlearned, lean, is the word of God evidencing itself unto their faith, by its own light and power. The unlearned are for the most part capable of no other evidence, and yet upon this alone, in all ages, in life and death, in doing and suffering, they have evidenced another and great sort of stability and firmness in cleaving to it, and suffering cheerfully for it, on this account only, than the most learned, who were best furnished with arguments of another nature, but wanted this: and indeed if this is not allowed to be the ground of faith, there can be no divine faith leaning upon a divine and infallible bottom; and the

vulgar, who are incapable of any other evidence, must rove in uncertainty, and *pin their faith upon the sleeves of their teachers:* but blessed be God, here is a ground sufficient to rest on, that will not fail. He speaks, and his sheep, notwithstanding that simplicity, which makes them contemptible in the eyes of the world, *know his voice, hear him,* and *follow it,* and *will not hear the voice of a stranger.*

PROP. XI. "Whereas it may be pretended, that on "supposition of what has been now asserted, the people "of God, at times when they discern not this light, feel "not this power, have no ground for their faith, with re- "spect unto these passages or portions of scripture, which "do not thus evidence themselves to be from God, at "the time of their perusal, or of their hearing of them, "by affecting the believer's mind, with a sense of this "divine light and power. In opposition to this objec- "tion, and for removing the ground of it, I offer the fol- "lowing truth, which afterwards I shall clear, That "there is no part of the scriptures, in so far as God "speaks in them, but doth thus sufficiently evidence "his authority in its season, unto persons capable of "discerning it, and duly applying themselves in the way "of the Lord's appointment, in so far as they are at "present concerned to receive, believe and obey it, in "compliance with their present duty, and reach the "meaning of the proposition in and by the use of the "means of God's appointment."

This objection has sometimes had a very formidable aspect to me, and therefore I shall distinctly propose, so far as the brevity designed will permit, the grounds whereon I was satisfied about the truth proposed in opposition to it, in the following explicatory and confirming observations, referring for further clearing, as to the way wherein the Lord quieted me, and relieved me of objections, to the foregoing chapter.

1. We are to observe, that faith, or that power in man, whereby he assents to the truth upon testimony, is corrupted, as well as his other powers, by his fall. And though in believers it is renewed, they receiving an un-

derstanding, whereby they know him that is true, and *know his voice from that of a stranger*, yet even in them it is imperfect, and habitually weak, they being renewed but in part, and so knowing but in part, as it is with respect to his other powers, so it is as to this. And besides this habitual weakness, which engages them to cry to the Lord daily for carrying on the *work of faith with power*, and an increase of faith to believe and live to God in a due manner; besides, I say, this habitual weakness, it is liable to various extraordinary incidental disorders, arising from inward and outward occasions, while the believer is here in this valley of tears, subject unto the miseries occasioned by the remaining power of indwelling corruptions, which are in themselves restless, and raise many fogs, damps and mists to overcloud the soul: and by the violence of outward temptations, which Satan and the world throng in upon them, through the wise permission of God, for the exercise of their faith in this state of trial, the darknes is exceedingly increased, faith weakened, or at least straitened as to its exercise. And by this means this spiritual discerning is sometimes more and sometimes less obstructed and darkened. Now if at such seasons, while the believer finds himself thus out of order, he cannot discern this evidence of the divine authority of the word, no not where it shines clearest, in so far as to quiet him, he has no reason to reject the word, or question it for want of evidence, but may be, and ordinarily believers are exercised in complaints of their own darkness, as the cause of their not discerning God in his word: *Vitium est in organo*, there is no fault in the word, but in the discerning power. The argument, if it be urged with respect to such a case as this, would prove that there is no light in the sun.

2. The Lord's people, through the power of corruption, and force of temptation, are often negligent and inadvertent, and do not apply their minds nor incline their hearts unto the word, with the attention necessary to discern the evidence of God in the word; and as a punishment of this, God withdraws, and leaves their minds under the darkness they are hereby cast into, and then when

God passes by before, or on the *right* or *left hand*, and worketh round about them, they cannot perceive him. If we turn our back to the light, or shut our eyes, or will not be at pains to remove motes, or humors that obstruct our sight, no wonder we do not discern the light. When we have idols in our hearts and eyes, no wonder we see not God. If we lay not aside the filthiness of our hearts, we cannot *receive the engrafted word, that is able to save our souls*, in a due manner.

3. Although the whole scriptures come from God, and are his word, yet every proposition contained in them, as it is a proposition in itself, expressive of such a particular purpose or thought, is not his word: for God sometimes tells us men's word's, and the devil's words. Now though God speaks them in so far as to teach us that they are such person's words, yet the propositions in themselves are not to be received with faith; but we are only to assent to this upon the authority of God, that they said so and so; not always that these are true; for oftentimes in themselves they are false and pernicious. Now, evidence as to any more than the truth of God in the historical narration of them, is not to be expected, nor are the scriptures to be impeached for want of it.

4. Although every divine truth which God speaks, has equal authority, and sufficient evidence, yet every scripture truth has not a beaming evidence, equally great, clear and affecting. The scripture is like the heaven, another piece of divine workmanship. It is full of stars, every one of these has light sufficient to answer its own particular use for which it was designed, and to satisfy the discerning and attentive beholder, that it is light; but yet every one gives not a light equally clear, great, glorious, affecting and powerful: *There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars: and one star excelleth another in glory;* and sometimes the greatest light, if it is at the greatest distance, like the fixed stars, affect us less, and shine less clear to us, than weaker lights, which, like the moon, are nearer. In the scripture there are propositions which tell us things, which though they are in their own place and proper circumstances, useful to them, for whom they are particularly designed, and to their proper scope; yet

they are comparatively of less importance to us, as acquainting us with things of less considerable nature and use to us, and which lie not so far out of our reach, being in some measure known, or knowable without divine revelation, though it was necessary, that in order to their particular use to us in our walk with God, they should be better secured, and offered us upon the faith of the divine testimony. Again, there are other propositions, which hold forth to us truths in their own nature of more importance, that lie further out of our reach, being neither known, nor indeed knowable by us, without divine revelation; and which in our present cases and circumstances are more nearly suited to our case, and wherein therefore our present concernment doth more directly appear to be interested, and which therefore impress us with, and leave in us effects more lasting and discernible. Now it must be allowed, that the truths of this last sort have an evidence more bright, great, affecting and sensible, than those of the former sort.

5. Hereon sundry subordinate observations offer themselves, which are of the greatest importance for clearing the difficulty under consideration. 1. Truths in scripture, or propositions acquainting us with things, otherwise in some respect within our reach, and only vouched by God in order to the stability of our faith in them, (in so far as we are in practice obliged to lay weight on them) and to give us, not so much satisfaction as to their truth absolutely, as some additional security about them; these cannot be supposed so discernibly to affect our minds, as truths of another nature, inasmuch as this additional evidence is more difficult to distinguish from the evidence we have otherwise for them. Besides that, God seeing that we are not so hard to be induced to a belief of them, or so liable to temptations that may shake our faith, sees it not meet to stamp such bright, lively and affecting impressions of himself on them; for it is unworthy of him to do any thing in vain. 2. On the other hand, these propositions which disclose the secret purposes, or knowledge of God, and things hid in it, that lie within the reach of no mortal, or perhaps no

created understanding, without revelation, must make a more vivid and lively impression on the mind, as illuminating it with the knowledge of things, whereto it was, and by its own reach forever must remain a stranger. 3. In like manner truths, wherein our eternal salvation, or present relief from incumbent trouble, is directly concerned, do more forcibly affect, and have a more powerful influence, than those which lie more remote from our present use, of how great advantage soever in their proper place they may be. The moon, which points out my way in the night, guides me, and saves me from losing myself or my way, at that time affects me more than the light of the sun, which I have formerly seen, but do not now behold; though the moon comparatively has no light, and borrows that which it hath from the sun. In like manner, truths in themselves of less importance, and which derive all their glory from those that are more important, yet, when they suit my present case, affects me more, and their evidence appears greater. *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* That there is such a city as Jerusalem, or that there was such an one, the scripture tells us. Of this we are otherwise informed, and are not likely to be tempted as to its truth; this however is told us in the word, and therefore we are to receive it on the testimony of the word; but the faith of it is not so difficult, on accounts mentioned; it is not told but with respect to some particular scope, and we have only an additional security about it. Hereon our minds are not so illuminated, influenced, and affected with the discovery, as when God tells us, he *was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.* The discovery of this fills us with a sense of *the glory of God*, hitherto unknown, and that lay far out of the reach of vulgar eyes, or any mortal to discover, without divine revelation. And therefore the discovery affects the more. Again, I am perplexed about through-bearing in some particular strait; a promise of grace to help in it, though it is of less importance than the forementioned discovery of reconciliation, and has no efficacy, light or glory, save what it derives from the former, yet coming in the season wherein I am wholly exercised about it, and the

case whereto it relates, it affects me more. 4. Where the same truth is at the same time discovered by different lights, it is not easy for persons, if not very discerning and attentive, to understand the distinct and particular influence of the several lights; such as that of natural light, human testimony, and revelation; and yet each of them have their own particular use, which upon its extinction would appear by the defect we would feel.

6. With respect to truths of high importance, otherwise unknown, which affect our minds with the enriching light of things, by us formerly not known or knowable, and which by their suitableness to present circumstances, or exercise, do more strongly affect with a sense of the divine authority, and illuminate the mind, there is no difficulty, save in the cases afterwards to be taken notice of, or the like.

7. As to these truths and scripture propositions which relate to things not so remote from our apprehensions, or are not so suitable to our circumstances, at present, or discover things of less importance to us, it is owned, that even real Christians who have faith, or a spiritual discerning, for ordinary, are not, upon hearing or reading them, struck or affected with so sensible, clear and affecting evidence of God, as they are in other scriptures of a different nature and relation, which arises from the nature of the truths in themselves, the manner and design of God in the delivery, our present circumstances, the weakness and imperfection of our faith, the incidental indispositions we are under, and other causes which may be easily collected from what has been formerly hinted in the preceding observations.

8. All this, notwithstanding the least considerable of these truths, has sufficient evidence of the divine authority, that is, such an evidence as answers the design of God in them, and is able to determine the believer's assent, and oblige him to obey or submit, and is every way suitable to the weight that is to be laid on them, with respect to the scope they are mentioned for, and importance of the matter; which though at all times it is not equally discernible, for the reasons abovemen-

tioned, or others of a like nature; yet in its proper season it is observed by judicious, observing, and reflecting Christians. As for instance, when any of these truths, of the least apparent importance, are questioned by Satan or men, then the authority of God is felt to have that influence and awe upon the consciences of believers, as will not allow them to part with the *least hoof* or *shred* of divine truth, and will make them, maugre all opposition, cleave to it, though it should cost them their life. Likewise when the Spirit of God is to apply these truths to the particular scope at which he aimed in asserting them in the book of God, then not only have they such evidence as influences assent and adherence, but emboldens the soul to lay that stress on them, which the case doth require.

9. Whereas neither our present imperfect state and capacities, the nature of the things, nor other circumstances, allow of an evidence equally clear and great as in other truths, the wisdom and goodness of God, in consideration of this, to prevent the shaking, or at least failing of our faith, have as to these provided many ways for our security: As, 1. Though in the particular passages, such evidences shine not in themselves apart, yet there often appears a beaming light, when they are presented in reference to the scope intended by God. 2. Other passages are joined with them, placed near them, and related to them, which have a further evidence of God, and though we cannot discern them when they are looked at abstractly, yet when we look to them in relation to these, on which they hang, and to which they are connected, we are satisfied. And I conceive there may be an eye to this, in dropping doctrinal passages, and inserting them in scripture history. 3. This objection principally respects the Old Testament; as to the divine authority of which we are particularly secured by plain and evident testimonies in the New Testament. 4. Sometimes with such truths there are direct assertions of the Lord's speaking of them joined; of which there are many instances in the books of Moses, wherein it is expressly declared, that what was then enjoined, was by the particular command of God. 5. Believers

for ordinary, being, in the reading of the word of God, made sensible of his authority, will not be easily brought to admit of any suspicion, that a book wherein God shews himself so evidently concerned, and owns, as to the bulk, to be from him, is or can by him be allowed to be in other places filled up with propositions, or matters of a coarser alloy: And therefore they will rather question themselves, and their own ignorance, than impeach the divinity of the scriptures on this account.

10. Though no faulty obscurity is chargeable on the scriptures, (as much of them as in present circumstances is of absolute necessity to believers, in order to their acceptable walking with God, being clearly revealed) yet there are many truths not understood by all, nor perhaps by any, therein inserted, to leave room for the diligence, trial of the faith of Christians, their progress in knowledge, and other wise ends. Now, till in the use of appointed means, the Spirit of God open to us the meaning of these scriptures, we cannot perceive the light and power that is in them: but whenever he opens these scriptures, that same light that discovers the meaning, will not fail to affect, and make *our hearts burn within us*, with the sense of divine light, authority and power. Of this the experience of the people of God, as they grow in knowledge, furnishes them daily with new instances, and therefore they do not stumble at the want of the present sense of this light, but are quickened to diligence, excited to frequent cries for opening of their eyes, that they may understand the wonders, that by the knowledge of other parts of the word they are induced to believe couched in these parts, which yet they know not.

11. As has been more than insinuated, there are, in scripture, truths designed for, and suited to different persons, in different circumstances; the book of God being designed for the use of the whole church, and all in it, in all stations, relations, cases, temptations and different circumstances, in which any are, have been in, or may be in. Now when God speaks to one, what he says cannot be so affecting to another, no wise in the

same or like case; though yet he may know somewhat of the Lord's voice in it. And the same is to be said as to the same person, with respect to different cases.

12. It must be still minded, that though every part of scripture has in its proper place and degree, a sufficient evidence of the divine authority, yet the actual discerning of it depends very much upon the present state of the discerning power or faith of the Christian, which discerns it or not, or discerns it more or less clearly, as it is stronger or weaker, more free from accidental indispositions, outward temptations, or more affected by them. And the same is to be said, as to its being more or less intently and orderly applied to the observation of the evidence of God in the word.

13. Yet whereas they, who are once renewed, do continue still *children of the light*, and have a spiritual capacity of discerning the *Lord's voice* from that of a *stranger*, they do for ordinary, in the scriptures, find the authority of God evidencing itself suitably to the particular exigence of their particular cases, where the truths that occur are not such wherein their present faith or practice is immediately affected; or where the truths are such as to which, in their own abstract nature, no more is required save a bare assent, they being only inserted with respect to some other particular scope, where the truths are not presently assaulted, where they are not immediately called to hazard much upon them, or in other the like cases, they are indeed less affected; but one way or other, from one thing or another, as much of God shines in them as is sufficient to engage to a present adherence, and some becoming reverence as to the oracles of God, which may in their season manifest their usefulness to us, and do at present manifest it to others. And where truths are of a different nature and importance, and suit present necessities, and require more distinct actings of faith or obedience, and we are called to lay more stress on them; in that case the evidence of God shines more brightly. And scarce ever will a discerning and attentive Christian, who is not grievously indisposed by some casual disorder, read the scriptures, or any considerable part of them, but some

where or other, in the scope or particular words, and propositions, or their contexture, some light will shine in upon the soul, enforcing a conviction, *That God is in it of a truth.*

14. When the faith of the Lord's people is assaulted as to the truth of the word; when in difficult cases and duties they are called to lay much stress upon the word, and hazard as it were their all; when they are distressed with particular and violent temptations, and need comfort; when under spiritual decays, and God designs to restore them; when newly brought in, and need to be confirmed; when they are humble and diligent, and the Lord designs to reward them graciously, and encourage them to go on; when difficulted to find duty, and waiting on the Lord for light, in cases of more than usual importance; when the Lord has a mind to carry on any to peculiar degrees of holiness and grace, and employ them in special services; and, in a word, wherever any extraordinary exigence requires, then the Lord opens his people's ears, removes what intercepts the discoveries of his mind, fixes their ear to hear, and speaks the word distinctly, powerfully and sweetly to the soul, and gives them in and by it, such a taste of his goodness, wisdom, and power, and experience of his authority in the word, and his gracious design and hand in its application at present, as fills the soul with the *riches* and *full assurance of faith*, peace, joy, and stedfastness in *believing*.

PROP. XII. "Whereas there are different readings of "particular places in ancient copies, and places wrong "translated in our versions, it may be pretended, that "we are, or may be imposed upon, and assent to truths, "or rather propositions, not of a divine original, casually crept into our copies of the original, or translation. "In answer hereto, the foregoing ground of faith lays "a sufficient bottom for the satisfaction of Christians, in "so far as their case and particular temptations require."

To clear this a little, I shall offer the ensuing remarks:

1. Where the authority of God evidences itself in the way above explained, and confirmed to the mind, believers have a stable and sure foundation for their faith, whether they use *translations* or the *originals*; though it must be allowed, where persons are capable of it, the originals are most satisfying. And this is plainly the case, as all real Christians from certain experience know, as to all the truths of the greatest importance, and whereon our faith or obedience are more immediately or directly concerned: so that as to these there is no room left for this objection.

2. The wisdom of God has so carefully provided for the security and stability of our faith, as to particular truths of any considerable importance, against pretences of this, or alike nature, that our faith rests not upon the evidence of one single testimony, but such truths upon a variety of occasions are often repeated, and our faith leans upon them, not only as thus frequently repeated, but cleared and confirmed by their connexion to other truths which infer them, and to the whole analogy of faith, or current of the scriptures, with respect to that which is the principal design of God. So that we are in no hazard of being deprived of any one truth, of any considerable influence, in faith or practice, by pretended corruptions, or wrong translations. The famous Dr. Owen, who had considered the whole various readings, and well knew the failures of particular translations, observes, That were all the various readings, added to the worst and most faulty translation, the church of God would not sustain by it the loss of one important truth.

3. Where any person is particularly concerned to be satisfied which is the right reading of any particular passage, and how it ought to be translated, they may, by the help of the ministers of the gospel, such of them as are particularly fitted with skill in such matters, and by the endeavors of learned men, who have particularly considered every one of these passages, in a humble dependence on God for the blessing of these means, (which the wise God has multiplied, since difficulties of this sort began to create any trouble to the faith of his people) by these means I say, joined with an eye to the Lord,

they may come to be particularly satisfied. *If any man will do his will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it is of God.*

4. Where there is not access to these means, which will not readily happen to persons called to such exercise, (which rarely befalls the ordinary sort of Christians) yet the Lord can easily relieve the persons thus exercised, by evidencing his authority to the conscience in a satisfying light, or by enabling him to wait for light until the solution comes, or by removing the temptation, when it becomes too strong, or by leading him to rest in the particular truth, as secured by other passages not questioned, or by some such like pay.

5. The difficulty as to translations is really of less importance; and as to the other about pretended corruptions, ordinary Christians, whose consciences are daily affected with the evidence of God's authority in the word, and his owning it as his word, speaking by it to them, and conveying divine influences of light, life and comfort, will not fear or entertain any suspicion so unworthy of God, as that he could allow the word he thus owns, under a pretence of his authority, to impose on them assertions of human extract, and of any ill consequence to their faith or obedience.

6. I shall only subjoin this one observation, That enemies gain more by proposing these pretended corruptions *in cumulo*,* and in such a bulky way, as to affright Christians who are capable of such objections, than by insisting upon any particular one, and attempts to prove them of equal authority with the reading retained in the approved originals. Their unsuccessfulness in endeavors of this last sort discovers, that there is really nothing of weight in that so much noised objection about various readings: for if there were any such readings as could really make any considerable alteration, and were supported with any authority able to cope with the received readings, why do they not produce these? Others are of no consideration; these only are to be regarded: and of this sort there are but very few that the most impudent dare pretend; and these few have been dis-

* "In mass."

proved and disallowed by persons of equal capacity and learning. But to leave this, which is above the ordinary sort of Christians, the Lord's people, to whom he has evidenced his own authority, in the way above mentioned, will be moved with none of these things. They will not forego the word, but retain it as their life, and pay respect to it as the word of God; and they have good reason to do so.

I shall now observe hence,

1. How justly divine faith may be said to be infallible, as standing on an infallible ground, the faithfulness and truth of God in the word. Through darkness we may sometimes not discern, through negligence not observe, or through the force of temptations interposing betwixt us and it, we may lose sight of the evidence of this authority; and so our faith may shake or fail. But while it fixes on this, it cannot fail, though we may quit, or by violence be beat off; the ground is firm, and cannot fail, the scriptures cannot be broken.

2. Hence it is, That the meanest and weakest believers, who know nothing of the props others have to support them, do cleave as firmly to the word, run with all courage, and much cheerfulness, all hazards for it, to the loss of whatever is dear to them, life not excepted, as the most judicious divine, and oftentimes they are much more firm. This is upon no other grounds accountable. This *reason of faith* is as much exposed to them as to the most learned.

3. All objections arising against this *ground of faith*, will be easily solved, if we consider, 1. That the scriptures are a relief provided by sovereign grace, for those of the race of fallen man, to whom God designs mercy, and so God was not obliged to adjust it in all respects to the natural capacities of men in their present state, but it was meet that the word should be so writ, that room should be left for the discoveries of the sovereignty of grace, and the other means God designed to make use of in subserviency to the word. It was not meet nor necessary that all should be so proposed, as to lie open to men without the assistance of the Spirit, and without the ministry of the word. 2. The word was not designed alone to conduct us, but God has given the Spirit with

the word, who teaches us in and by it, as he sees meet. 3. The word is designed to be a rule to all ages, and therefore it was not meet or necessary, that what concerns persons in one age should be equally exposed in its meaning unto other persons, who lived in different times. It is sufficient, that in every age, what concerns that time lies so open, that in the use of the means of God's appointment, men may reach that wherein they are concerned. 4. The word was designed for persons of different stations, capacities and cases, who ought to rest satisfied in the obvious discoveries of what concerns them, in their own particular circumstances, and is required to be believed and obeyed, more particularly in a way of duty, of them, though they cannot see so clearly what belongs to others in different circumstances. 5. God has not systematically and separately discoursed all particular cases under distinct heads; but to leave room for the conduct of the Spirit, for exciting the diligence of Christians to study the whole scriptures, and for other reasons obvious to infinite wisdom, he has digested them in a method, more congruous to these wise ends. 6. The Lord designing the exercise of the faith of his own, and to humble them, and to drive them to a dependence on himself, and to punish the wicked, and give them who will stumble at the ways of God somewhat to break their neck on, he has digested them so, as that there may be occasions, though always without fault on God's part, for all those ends: *Wisdom will be justified of her children,* and to some *he speaks in parables, that seeing they may not see.*